



The Snowball Effect by rubylaurus

Category: Stranger Things, 2016

Genre: Adventure, Romance

Language: English

Characters: Eleven/Jane H., Jonathan B., Mike W., Nancy W.

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2019-07-18 06:36:55

Updated: 2019-10-18 08:38:55

Packaged: 2019-12-12 14:25:40

Rating: T

Chapters: 24

Words: 24,988

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: ***STRANGER THINGS SEASON THREE SPOILERS*** It's all fun and games when a few misbehaving kids meet up in a town unbeknownst to their parents. That is, until they meet up with a very stressed out old friend. From there, the "calm, relaxing weekend" they had planned kind of goes down the drain. LOTS OF MILEVEN AND JANCY.

1. Definitely Not Phone Sex I

Before we start: THANKS for clicking on this! i just want everyone to know that this is mostly for myself. it's definitely not my best work, but i was traumatized after the ending of season three so i need to work through it lol. i thought maybe some others could get solace too! the plot is ridiculous and unrealistic but that's showbiz baby. there will be a strong emphasis on mileven and jancy! yay!

0

0

0

"...and such a shame about that Billy Hargrove," Karen Wheeler said, taking a sip from her glass. Ms. Johnson, sitting across from her, nodded in agreement. The women each moved to pour themselves another margarita, but before either of them could get to the pitcher, the phone on the wall started blaring in their ears

Karen quickly turned around and grabbed it off the receiver. "Hello?" she said.

"Hi, Karen," came a familiar voice. "It's Joyce. My kids have been anxious to talk to your kids since we got here. Are either of them around?"

"Of course," Karen replied. "Both of them are lazing around upstairs. I don't think they know what to do with themselves since you guys left." She laughed, covering the phone with her hand. "Nance, Mike! Byers are on the phone!"

The sound of pattering feet told Karen that both of her children were tearing towards the upstairs phone. She heard the telltale click of the line connecting, then Mike's eager voice.

"Will? El?" he asked excitedly. "Are you there?"

Joyce beamed. "Just a sec, Mike, I'll put you on with Will first."

There was a moment of silence. Mike's heart sped up with anticipation as he awaited his friend.

"You should just let me go first," Nancy said from behind him, leaning against a wall and rolling her eyes. "You're going to talk to Will for like five hours and then El for ten."

"Yeah, maybe," Mike responded saltily, "but I don't want to have to listen to you and Jonathan have phone sex."

Nancy shot him a glare, then disappeared back into her room. Mike simply shook his head and turned his attention back to the phone. It was taking an unusually long time for Will to pick up. Maybe something was wrong? Mike pushed the thought away before it could manifest into a hundred different anxieties.

Finally, his friend's cheerful voice blasted onto the phone. "Hi, Mike," came Will's excited greeting.

"Byers!" Will exclaimed. "What's going on?"

"Well," Will said, "we just finished unloading all the stuff into our kitchen. The living room is halfway done. Other than that, though, the house is still pretty much empty."

"What are you sleeping on?" Mike asked incredulously.

Will chuckled. "El is on one of our mattresses, Mom is on the couch, and Jonathan and I are...pulling whatever we can out of our 'blankets and pillows' boxes. But as soon as we're done with the living room, we're unpacking the bedroom stuff."

"How many rooms are there?"

Will tapped a finger to his chin. "Let's see. We have a kitchen, a living room, a bathroom, and three bedrooms. Mom and El are getting their own, and Jonathan and I are sharing. It's not too bad, though, because he's leaving for college next year."

Grimacing, Mike responded, "I totally forgot about that. Nancy's going to have a breakdown. I don't even know where *she* wants to go to school."

"Maybe she and Jonathan can go to the same place," Will suggested. "NYU's a pretty good college. Then they can get married and live in Hawkins. Maybe that'll finally convince mom to let us move back." His voice broke on the last sentence.

Mike frowned. "Hey, Will," he said, "Don't worry. I'm sure Michigan is going to be great. You get a fresh start. No more stupid idiots being mean."

Sniffling, Will replied, "I know, I know." He sighed. "I'm just worried that when I come back to visit for Christmas, everything will be different. You and Lucas and Dustin will all be close still and I'll be the odd man out."

"Never," Mike said firmly. "When you get back, it'll be like you never left. Promise. And hey, while you're gone, we'll work on some really cool campaigns. That way, we can play DnD for a whole day straight."

"That would be fun," Will said through his tears. "And maybe we can have Max and El play with us."

Mike raised an eyebrow. "Are you sure? If you wanted to, we could have a day without girls. Just like you wanted."

"No," Will said, his voice filled with resolve. "After everything we've been through, they're a part of our party now. We can't just go on adventures without them. It wouldn't feel right."

A wide smile spread across Mike's face. "Yeah," he agreed. "It wouldn't." He let out a long sigh and rested his head against the wall. "How's school been so far? Have you gone yet?"

"School's actually been great," Will replied, his voice becoming brighter. "El and I are in a lot of the same classes, so we don't have to face it alone. And there's an AV club just like in Hawkins! The teacher's cool. Obviously not as cool as Mr. Clarke, but she's still awesome. And the kids are nice, too."

"Better than us?" Mike asked teasingly.

Will scoffed. "As if," he replied. "I told them about Dustin's Cerebro

and now all of them want to try and build one themselves."

"Now they can all sing Never Ending Story renditions with their Mormon girlfriends," Mike said with a snort.

Will laughed. "Ok," he said, "El's getting impatient and I think she might blow out every light in this house if she has to wait any longer. I miss you, Mike."

"Miss you, too, man," Mike replied. "Talk to you soon."

2. Definitely Not Phone Sex II

Nancy poked her head out of her room. "Are you done now?" she asked. "That was way faster than I thought." She moved towards him and reached out to take the phone.

Mike held it just out of her reach. "No way," he said defensively. "I was just saying goodbye to Will. I still have to talk to El, so you can piss off."

Sticking up her middle finger, Nancy stormed back into her room.

A high, soft voice came through the phone. "What does 'piss off' mean?" El asked inquisitively.

Mike's heart skipped a beat. "El," he said excitedly. "It's so good to hear your voice."

"You too," she replied. There was a brief silence before she repeated, "What does 'piss off' mean?"

"Oh, that," Mike said. "Well, uh, it's a way of saying 'go away'. Nancy was trying to steal the phone from me so she could talk to Jonathan. But I got here first, fair and square. So I told her to go away."

"Ok," El replied hesitantly. "So if Joyce is talking on the phone and I want to talk to you, I tell her to piss off?"

Mike tried not to laugh. "No," he said, "definitely do not do that. 'Piss off' is kind of a rude thing to say to someone."

He listened to El comprehend that. "Like mouth breather," she said sagely.

Mike chuckled. "Yeah, like mouth breather." He glanced at the ceiling. "Have your powers started to come back at all?" he asked. He knew it was unlikely, but maybe leaving Hawkins had done something good for her.

She didn't answer. Taking this for a no, Mike lowered his head. "Don't worry," he said encouragingly. "I'm sure you'll get there soon. Until

then, at least you have Will and Jonathan to get things from high places for you."

She giggled. "Yeah," she sighed.

"Are the Byers treating you well?" Mike asked. "Are you happy with them?"

"Yes," El replied firmly. "Joyce is nice. She lets me eat eggos for breakfast. Will and I are really good friends now. We go to school together."

"He told me," Mike agreed. "What about Jonathan?"

El hesitated. "Jonathan doesn't talk a lot. He stays in his room when he isn't at school. I think he's really sad. He misses Nancy."

Letting a hiss of air out his mouth, Mike shook his head. "I don't know what he sees in her," he said. "It's not like she's nice or funny or anything. She's like the worst sister ever."

"I can hear you," came Nancy's muffled voice, accompanied by several loud bangs on the wall. "You can stop bad mouthing me to my boyfriend's sister, now."

"Piss off," Mike replied loudly.

El snorted loudly on the other side of the phone. "Piss off," she murmured to herself as if it were the funniest joke she'd ever heard.

"So have you talked to Max at all since you got to Michigan?" Mike asked. "Is she still conspiring against me? I know she hangs out with us all the time, but I still think she has it out for me."

"Haven't talked to her," El replied. "Joyce called you first. I think tomorrow night we'll call Lucas and Max. Are they still boyfriend and girlfriend?"

"You only left a week ago, not *that* much has changed," Mike said with a rueful smile. "I mean, true, Max and Lucas don't have the best track record of staying together for longer than a few weeks. But I think they're in a good place now."

"She didn't dump his ass," El mused.

An idea popped into Mike's head. "Hey," he said slowly, "do you and Will have your walkie talkies with you still? Because if you do, we could maybe contact you whenever we wanted using Cerebro."

"We brought them," El assured, "but they're still in boxes. As soon as they're out, I'll tell you. We can talk on Cerebro. And sing together."

Mike laughed. "I don't know if we could ever be as good as Dusty-bun and Susie-poo."

"How is Dustin?" El asked.

"He's doing just fine," Mike answered. "He hangs out at the arcade a lot with Steve and Robin. They give him free tokens when Keith isn't looking. He and Max got into a big fight over who could get the higher score on Kong."

"Max won," El said, without a hint of doubt in her voice.

Mike nodded. "Yup," he affirmed. "She beat his ass."

They stood there silently for a moment, each simply taking in the other's presence. Mike grinned at the floor, imagining El's face as she gripped the phone. "Isn't it amazing that we can talk to each other so easily?" Mike said happily. "Imagine if we lived in the olden days. We'd have to write each other letters. That would take so long."

"Letters are good," El said. "We can keep parts of people with us. Even if they are gone."

"Do you want me to write you a letter?" Mike asked earnestly. "Because I will."

"A letter," El repeated. "Yes. So I can keep it in my pocket."

"If you wanted to," Mike said ambivalently. "Look, I'll write it now. Nancy really wants to talk to Jonathan, and I wish I could talk to you all night, but I can't. So I'll get you your letter."

"Ok," El said. "I love you."

Mike froze. He moved his lips, but no sound came out.

"Mike?"

He let out a deep breath. "I love you too, El," he said finally. "And I miss you. And I want to talk to you soon. Ok?"

"Soon," El agreed.

0

0

0

Yay, I love Mileven so much! I wouldn't say OTP, but they're still so adorable. I loved all their moments in season 3. Even the breakup! I felt like it gave them opportunity to grow as a couple. Next chapter is Jonathan and Nancy!

3. Definitely Not Phone Sex III

"Alright, that's enough," Nancy said, coming up behind her brother and snatching the phone from him. She shoved him out of the way and lifted it to her ear. "Hi, El," she said. "Can you get Jonathan for me?"

"Yes," the girl replied. She laid the phone on the kitchen counter and walked down the hallway towards Jonathan and Will's room. Cracking the door open, she said, "Nancy is on the phone."

Immediately, the older boy was on his feet and out of his room. "Thanks, El," he said, with a quick smile.

He picked up the phone and held it close to his ear. "Nance?" he said, almost desperately. "Are you there?"

"Jonathan," replied Nancy, her chest suddenly overflowing with warmth. "Hi."

"Hi," he responded.

Nancy bit down on her lip. "Well? Tell me everything. How was the trip? How's unpacking going? Have you started school?"

"Woah there," Jonathan said, his lips twitching into a grin. The sound of her voice rang like music in his head. "I almost forgot how much you talked," he teased. Then he shrugged, looking around the bare little house. "Let's see. The trip was fine. Will was crying for about an hour. But then I put on a mixtape I made for the ride and he perked up a bit."

"And tell me about your house," she urged.

"Well, it's definitely a lot smaller than our old one, which is kind of impressive," Jonathan admitted, looking around the kitchen. "Mom's got the master bedroom, El has her own room, and Will and I are sharing for now."

"Is it nice?"

"It doesn't have a patched up hole in the wall where Mom hacked through it with an axe, or cracks in the ceiling where a demogorgon broke through, or scorch marks on the wall where we blew it into another dimension, which is all nice," he admitted. "But it also doesn't have air conditioning yet."

"Good thing it's October," Nancy said.

"Good thing," Jonathan agreed.

Nancy blew a strand of hair out of her face. "So how's school? Have you made a bunch of friends yet?"

He let out a short laugh. "Yeah, you know me. I make so many friends I don't even know what to do with them."

"Come on. You have me. You have Steve."

"Steve," Jonathan corrected. "Is not my friend. We just happen to have some...shared trauma. And besides, even if we were ever friends, do you really think he liked me at all once we got together?"

Nancy pursed her lips. "Well at least you have me."

"It took my brother going missing and a demogorgon to bring us together," said Jonathan dryly. "Look, it's fine. It's just a year here and then I'm going off to college. I don't need to get close to anybody. Everybody I really care about is either here in this house with me or back on a cul-de-sac in Hawkins, Indiana."

Wiping a tear away from her cheek, Nancy leaned her head against the wall. "Do you know when we're going to see each other again?" she asked, trying to keep her voice from breaking.

"It's Thanksgiving now, officially," Jonathan said. "My Mom said it would be fine if you and Mike came up for a few days."

"That's too far away."

"It's a month and a half," Jonathan replied with a half smile. "And then we're coming back to stay for all of Christmas break. And I'll call you every Wednesday and Sunday. Like we agreed, remember?"

Nancy nodded, then quickly remembered that he couldn't see her. "Yeah," she said. "Yeah, that's good." All of a sudden, though, a thought struck her. "Hey, Jonathan," she said, "how long did you say the drive was?"

"About six and a half hours," he estimated, "depending on how bad traffic is. Why, what were you thinking?"

A sly grin slid onto her face. "On a Friday," she said, "after school. We could drive to a central location and spend the weekend together. Just you and me. We could drive back Sunday afternoon and be home by dinner."

For a moment, Jonathan didn't answer. There was a stunned silence as he seemed to try and take it all in. Nancy herself was a little shocked by the suggestion.

"Nance, that's..." Jonathan stammered, "I mean, it's insane. What would we tell our parents? Where would we stay?"

Nancy's face fell. "That's OK," she said, dejected. "We don't have to do it. It was just an idea I had. I guess I'll just wait until Thanksgiving."

"Hey," Jonathan said, a hint of humor in his voice. "Did I ever say I didn't want to do it?" He let out a short, choppy laugh. "I mean, it'll be hard. I don't know if my mom will approve."

"I know my parents won't approve," Nancy interjected. "I'll just tell them I'm at a friend's house. Or something."

"Yeah, it'll be 'or something' for me," Jonathan muttered. "But it's fine, I'll figure it out. We've done crazier, stupider things than this before."

"A lot crazier," Nancy agreed.

There was comfortable stretch of silence. Nancy listened to the familiar ins and outs of Jonathan's breathing. She wanted nothing more than to somehow be at his side at that exact moment and run her hands through his hair. If she closed her eyes and concentrated hard, she could almost feel his arms around her.

"I'll talk to you on Sunday, then," she said finally.

Jonathan let a long breath out of his nose. "I love you, Nancy."

"I love you, too," she replied wistfully.

There was a click, and the line went silent. She stared at the phone in her hands, wishing it could somehow transport her to Michigan.

"So you're going to sneak out of the house?" came a voice from behind her. She turned quickly, letting out a sigh of relief when she realized it wasn't either of her parents.

"Mike, you little shit," she growled, storming up to him and grabbing his shirt collar. "I didn't listen in when you were pouring your heart out to El, okay? Why the hell were you eavesdropping on us?"

He wrenched out of his sister's grip. "I heard you talking about Thanksgiving and Christmas," he said, "and I wanted to know the details. It wasn't my fault you have no survival instincts and couldn't hear me."

"I swear, if you breathe one word of this to Mom or Dad," she hissed, "I'll kill you. I will cold blooded murder you. Got it?"

Mike nodded silently, though appeared pensive. "Can you take me with you?" he asked. "And can you tell Jonathan to bring El?"

"What? No. Absolutely not," Nancy said incredulously. "Mom and Dad would find out. It's risky enough that we're going on our own. Who knows what would happen if we added you and El to the mix?"

Mike glared at her. "Well who knows what would happen if I accidentally let it slip that you were planning to sneak away and spend two nights with your boyfriend. Do they even know you guys have slept together?"

Immediately, Nancy's face was bright red. "How do you even know about that?" she asked sharply.

"Please, Nance," Mike said dryly. "I know you're good friends with Stacey, but spending three nights a week at her place? Unrealistic. And also Will told me he heard you in Jonathan's bedroom one morning."

Crossing her arms, Nancy spat, "So you're just going to blackmail me? Into letting you see your girlfriend?"

Mike shrugged. "That's the way it seems like to me," he said with a smirk.

"You are such a douchebag," Nancy groaned. "Fine. I'll talk to Jonathan about it on Sunday. If we even go through with this whole thing. You can tell her you're at Dustin's or Lucas's or something."

"Yes," Mike exclaimed, pumping his fist in the air. "Thanks, Nance. I take back what I said about you being the worst sister in the world."

"Thanks so much," Nancy replied, sarcasm dripping from her voice. "That means the world to me."

0

0

0

AHHH I LOVE NANCY AND JONATHAN. They were my favorites. I was so mad when i went online and found out that they were snubbed of their recognition by the fandom. they both deserve the entire world. BUT I also LOVE LOVE Nancy and Mike's relationship! They're very similar to me and my own little brother. I'm excited to do more of that sibling dynamic! AND I'm pumped to see how Jonathan and El interact with each other, since we didn't see any of it in the show.

4. PEAK Sibling Culture

It was a cloudy November day when Nancy and Mike piled into the car with their things and began the three hour drive to Smarton, Michigan.

Mike was standing at the edge of the street, right in front of his school, when Nancy pulled up and honked her horn. Rolling down the window, she yelled, "Hurry and get in, I had a late dismissal."

Dragging his backpack and duffel bag, Mike scrambled over to the car. "Took you long enough," he said, "This bag is heavy."

"What did you pack, bricks?" Nancy accused, heaving both bags into the backseat. "You know we're only there for two nights, right? I don't think you're going to need anything more than a couple changes of clothes. Maybe your toothbrush."

Mike shook his head. "You never know."

Nancy rolled her eyes. "Whatever." She reached into her pockets and pulled out fifty dollars. "This," she said sharply, "is all that I'm giving you. It covers lunch for both Saturday and Sunday and dinner for tomorrow night. If you have any extra, it comes back to me. And I expect to be paid back in full."

"You got it," Mike agreed, shoving the cash in his pocket. He leaned back into the back seat and began rifling through the bags. "What sorts of stuff did you bring?"

"Don't look in my stuff, creepo," Nancy said, grabbing his shirt and yanking him away. "And put your seatbelt on, I don't want you getting hurt."

Mike smiled teasingly up at her. "Aw, you do care about me," he said sweetly.

Nancy clicked her tongue. "No, I just don't want either of us to end up in the hospital. Because then parents are called. And if we weren't already dead, mom and dad would kill us."

This seemed to satisfy Mike. He leaned back in his seat and began to hum along to the radio. *He's just a poor boy from a poor family; spare him his life from this monstrosity.*

"Wow," he mused. "Our life is crazy."

Nancy raised an eyebrow. "Uh, yeah, kind of an understatement."

Mike continued. "I mean think about it. Two years ago we were just normal kids. I was playing Dungeons and Dragons with Dustin, Lucas, and Will. You were dating Steve and doing boring teenager stuff. Now we're experienced monster hunters, I'm dating a girl with superpowers from a secret government facility, and you're dating...Jonathan Byers. That might be the craziest part of all."

"Haha. You're hilarious, Mike."

He frowned suddenly. "Hey, what's the date today?"

"November 5th," Nancye replied. "Why?"

Blowing the hair out of his face, Mike sank further into his seat. "Tomorrow is the two year anniversary of Will's disappearance," he said solemnly. "I hope he's doing alright."

"I'm sure he's doing fine," Nancy reassured. "He's with Joyce, after all. I think that's what matters."

They were quiet for a few minutes, each preoccupied with their own thoughts. The Indiana countryside zoomed by, each mile reminding the Wheelers what exactly they were headed towards. Nancy felt a smile began to grow on her face.

"So, Mike," she said finally. "We haven't talked about you and El at all. Ever. Not since that night at the school when we fought the demogorgon. You told me you didn't like her. Was that a flat out lie?"

"We really don't have to talk about this now. Or ever," Mike said awkwardly, turning a brilliant shade of pink.

Nancy laughed. "So you get to poke and prod into my dating life but I can't even ask a simple question? What kind of world do you live in?"

"I didn't poke and prod," Mike argued.

"You used it for blackmail against me," Nancy said flatly. "I'd say that I get to ask you any damn questions I want."

"Fine," Mike groaned, "yes, it was a lie. Right after I told you that I kissed her and asked her to go to the Snowball Dance with me. But then she got blasted into another dimension and after that she was kept under lock and key by Hopper, so we didn't really get a chance to go through with anything until the next year."

Nancy's expression melted into a smile. "That's adorable," she said happily. "I can't believe you didn't tell me about that."

"Yeah, well, you lied to me, too," Mike defended. "Remember? I asked if you liked Jonathan and you were all like, 'Uh...no, he's just a friend, I don't like him like that, I'm a big liar and a hypocrite for criticizing my brother about not telling me about his love life.' Remember that?"

"I don't think those were my exact words," Nancy said with an eye roll. "And what are you talking about? I told the whole family once I started dating Jonathan."

"Apparently, I'm not a part of your family, because you want to know how I found out? Will called me and said he caught you guys making out in front of their house. Do you know how scarring that was for him and also for me?"

"Wow, alright," Nancy said, "I didn't realize how touchy you were about this."

"Where are we going, again?" Mike asked, swerving away from the line of conversation they were headed down. "You've told me jack shit about this plan other than we're meeting them halfway in between."

"First of all, language. Second of all, it's this town called Smarton in very southern Michigan," Nancy informed. "We're staying at Snowy Inn."

Mike stared out the front window. "Are you and I going to be in a

room together?"

"Yeah, it's the first time I'll be seeing my boyfriend in a month and I'm going to share a room with my little brother. What do you think, genius?" Nancy asked. "Jonathan and I are going to stay in one room, and you and El are going to be right next to us. With a double. Don't get any ideas, alright?"

"Hypocrite," Mike repeated.

"Hey, I'm the one paying for all this, so I get to do whatever I want, got it?" Nancy said sharply. "Besides, you're fourteen."

"Whatever," grumbled Mike, leaning back into his seat as they hurtled down the highway.

0

0

0

YES I LOVE MIKE AND NANCY WHEELER. A lot of this was honestly stuff my own little brother and I would say to each other haha. They are so, so fun to write about! And I'm very excited to finally have a reuniting of the kiddos in the upcoming chapters! Thanks to everybody who's followed, favorited, or reviewed!

5. Awkward Fourteen Year Olds

"Are we there yet?" Mike asked for the seventh time. He rolled over and stared at his sister, accidentally knocking their empty bag of Burger King on the ground. "It's been like five hundred hours."

"It's been three hours and fifteen minutes," Nancy responded, glancing at the clock. "We're almost there."

Looking around, Mike realized that they were indeed in the town of Smarton. It wasn't much different from Hawkins, only bigger. There were more stores and buildings rather than residential area. Down the road, he caught a glimpse of a large building with the words, 'Snowy Inn' on the front.

"That's it," he said excitedly. "There it is!"

Nancy grinned. "Yeah. There it is. OK, here's the deal. If they aren't there yet, I'm going to go inside and check in. You are going to wait out on the curb and greet them when they show up. Got it?"

"Got it," Mike confirmed. He immediately sat up straighter, peering out the window for any sign of the beat up old tan car.

They pulled into the parking lot at exactly 6:23. Each was already scanning the rows of cars before they were even out the door.

"Do you see them?" Nancy asked, squinting her eyes.

"Not yet," Mike responded.

After a few more seconds of searching, Nancy turned towards the hotel. "OK. It looks like they aren't quite here yet. You know the plan. Why don't you go wait by the street so they'll see you when they pass by."

"Sounds good to me," Mike replied, already on his way towards the busy road. He nodded at Nancy, who gave him a thumbs up and walked inside.

As soon as he reached the sidewalk, a loud honking noise snapped

him out of his anxious daze. He glanced up and saw the familiar looking car streaking down the street. Through the front window, he could see Jonathan, the flat of his hand on the horn, and El, waving like a maniac.

Sudden elation overtook Mike's chest as he waved back frantically. He motioned for them to go and meet him in the parking lot, then jogged back to where Nancy's car was.

"Over here," he called as their car pulled into the lot. They made their way through the rows and rows of vehicles before finally coming to a stop right in front of Mike. He smiled brightly, practically leaping at the passenger side door.

As soon as it was open, Mike was pulling El into his arms and laughing in delight. He ran his hands through her hair, taking in her looks, the sound of her voice, her smell, and everything else about her. She was dressed in a brown jacket, a soft blue t shirt and long black jeans, her hair hanging loose around her shoulders.

"Mike," she said happily, beaming up at him. "You're here."

"Yeah, I'm here," he said, his breaths quick and shallow. Seeing her there, right in front of him, was almost overwhelming.

He leaned down and pressed his lips against hers, the action familiar and filled with excitement. He could feel her smile as they kissed again and again, never seeming to get enough.

"Hey, Mike?" came Jonathan's voice, cutting through the world that Mike and El had suspended themselves in. "Any clue where your sister is?"

Pulling away from El just long enough to answer, he said, "Yeah, she's checking in right now. Probably in the lobby."

"Thanks," Jonathan replied with a quick smile. He hoisted the bags that he'd just unloaded from the car and began making his way into the hotel. Mike and El watched him go for a few seconds, then turned back from each other.

"Uh...hi," Mike stammered, unsure of what he could possibly say to

articulate the overwhelming joy that he felt.

El grinned wider. "Hi," she said back.

"H-how was your trip?" Mike asked. "Did you have a good ride?"

Nodding, El replied, "Yes. Jonathan is a very good driver."

"Did you eat dinner yet?" Mike questioned guiltily, suddenly remembering the empty bag of Burger King that was still in the car.

"Yes," El answered, to his relief. "We got McDonalds."

"Good, good. Maybe we can go to the hotel pool before bed. That would be fun."

"Fun."

Mike reached down and grabbed El's hands. They stared deeply into each other's eyes, neither fully convinced that they weren't dreaming.

"I can't believe we're actually here," Mike gushed. "I didn't think that Nancy would let me tag along. And I didn't know if you'd actually be here."

"Why? Of course I'd come."

"Well, yeah, I know. But maybe Joyce would have kept you home. Or Jonathan would have been so excited to see my sister that he just sped away in the car and forgot you," Mike said with a shrug. "Who knows."

"Should we go in and see the others?" El asked, glancing towards the building.

Mike smiled, a twinkle in his eye. "I think we can wait just a little bit longer."

0

0

0

Awww, Mileven is super cute! I'm a Jancy girl myself, but don't worry, we'll get them in the next chapter. I'm so glad that people are actually enjoying this! If you could drop even just a one sentence review, that would be amazing.

6. Less Awkward Seventeen Year Olds

The line wasn't long. There were only a couple people in front of Nancy as she stood impatiently with Mike's bags and her own. She figured that she'd be checked in and heading up to the room within five minutes.

Her impatience wasn't driven by the wait to check in, but rather with the noticeably empty doorway. She had waited more than a month to finally see Jonathan, and now he was late. Only by a few minutes, but still. She was close to going outside and just waiting with Mike so she could see as soon as the Byers arrived.

Eventually, there was only one person between her and the front desk. She reached into her coat pocket quickly, just to assure that her card was still in its place. When her fingers closed around the small plastic chip, she sighed in relief. It had been a stressful car ride. There were lots of things for her to worry about, lots of things that could go wrong on their trip.

Her parents thought she was at a sleepover with Stacey. They thought Mike, Lucas, Dustin, and Max were hanging out at Dustin's house. But one quick phone call to check on them could lead to their parents finding out what they were really up to that weekend.

Plus, she didn't know anything about Smarton. It was a bigger town than Hawkins, and there was a good chance any of them could and would get lost. Their things could get stolen. Nancy had had time to play out each and every scenario in her mind on the way there.

Finally, it was her turn to check in. She moved up to the front desk and smiled at the lady behind it. "Hi," she said, "my name's Nancy Wheeler; I have a reservation for..."

She trailed off as she glanced up and towards the door, her heart almost stopping for a moment. Standing against the darkened sky outside was Jonathan, scanning the room. He was illuminated by the lobby lights almost angelically.

"Miss, could you please continue?" the woman asked, but Nancy

wasn't paying any attention to her anymore. She dropped the bags she was carrying and began to drift towards Jonathan.

He locked eyes with her and halted in his steps for a moment, as if blinded. She saw him mouth her name. Then, with sudden urgency, he started to run towards her, disregarding his own bags by the door.

She matched his pace, at that moment needing to be by his side more than anything else in the whole world. With each step, her vision tunneled, ignoring the stares thrown their way by the other guests.

When they reached each other, the force of their collision almost knocked Nancy over. She wrapped her arms tightly around Jonathan's neck, throwing herself into his embrace. He pulled her tightly against him, burying his face into her hair. He kissed the top of her head over and over again, running his hands through her curls. She lifted her face towards him and placed her lips on his cheek, then moved until she found his mouth.

Nancy could have stayed there forever, breathing in his scent, but she soon remembered the receptionist she'd left hanging at the desk. Pulling away from Jonathan for a second, she nodded her head at the desk and grimaced. He followed her glance and raised his eyebrows.

"Maybe we should continue this somewhere else," Jonathan suggested. "After we finish checking in."

Pursing her lips and smiling up at him, Nancy nodded in agreement. Then she grabbed his hand and together, the two of them returned to the receptionist.

"I'm guessing you're the Jonathan Byers that was also listed under the reservation," the woman said, tilting her glasses with a smirk. "How long's it been since you guys have seen each other?"

"A little over a month," Nancy replied, grinning at Jonathan. "But it feels like forever."

"I'll bet," the receptionist murmured, typing into her computer. "Alright, it says here you're checking out on Sunday at three? Is that correct?"

"Yes, ma'am," Jonathan answered.

She reached down and pulled out two keys. "These are all yours, then. Rooms 353 and 354. Don't lose them. And have fun, lovebirds," she said with a wink.

"Oh, we're actually just friends," Jonathan said, his face shockingly straight.

For a moment, the receptionist's face turned a bright red as she glanced between the two of them. Her jaw slackened and she quickly adjusted her glasses. "Well, I-I'm sorry for the misunderstanding-" However, as she caught sight of Nancy's humored expression, she sighed in relief.

"Thank you," Nancy said, accepting the keys and shoving them into her pocket, still trying not to laugh. As they walked away, she gently slapped Jonathan's shoulder. "What was that for?" she asked. "You scared that poor lady half to death."

"Old time's sake," Jonathan replied, his own smile spreading across his face. "It's been a while since we had to clarify that we weren't together."

He squeezed Nancy's hand tighter, and she squeezed back. It felt right to be at his side again. They'd endured so much together that being apart had sent Nancy tumbling into a constant state of looking over her shoulder whenever she was at school or walking around town.

But suddenly she stopped. "Where are the kids?" she asked, looking back with a worried crinkle of her eyebrows.

Squinting through the window into the dark night sky, Jonathan pointed his finger at the two younger children, still standing together in the parking lot. They were locked in each others arms, kissing furiously.

"Oh, jeez," Nancy said, averting her eyes. "I'm never going to unsee that."

"Should we get them?" Jonathan asked. "They seem pretty happy where they are."

Nancy sighed. "Let's leave them for now. We can get settled and come back for them in a few minutes." She smiled at him for what seemed like the millionth time and together, the two of them started out for the room.

0

0

0

No words. I love Jancy with my whole soul. There's a lot of talk on the internet right now about Jonathan being the next character to die, and I don't think my heart could handle it. Anyways, thanks again for reading another chapter! And to everyone who left a review, you made my day :)

7. The Breaststroke

By nine in the evening, all four of them had gone down to the pool. It was mostly deserted other than an old man swimming laps on the far side and the bored looking lifeguard reading a magazine. Nancy and Jonathan were over in the hot tub, while Mike and El were playing with some pool toys in the shallow end.

Mike flung a plastic ring a few feet away, then held his hand out to keep El from diving for it. She looked at him inquisitively.

"They use pools to help train people that have been wounded back to physical health," Mike explained. "The water puts less pressure on them. Maybe we can do the same thing with your powers."

El's eyes lit up. "Good idea," she said. Then she turned back to the ring and held her hand out. Her eyes grew intense, as they always did when she was using her powers. Her jaw tightened and she furrowed her eyebrows. Mike's eyes widened as a faint electrical pulse rang in his ears.

But just as suddenly as it began, it stopped. El threw her hand down in frustration, sending a spray of droplets over at Mike.

He shook the wetness out of his hair, then, with a playful grin, splashed her back. She looked up at him in shock, rubbing her eyes. Then, without warning, she kicked her foot up and out of the water, completely drenching Mike.

For there it was a natural escalation. Mike grabbed a pool noodle and slapped the water with it. El ran back to the side and jumped in, arms and legs flailing, and effectively drenched both Mike and herself.

A shrieking whistle cut their playing short. They glared up at the lifeguard, who gave them a stink eye right back. "Stop rough housing," she ordered, flipping a page in her magazine.

Mike and El reluctantly waded back to the steps. Sitting down next to each other, they sat silently, each lost in their own thought. They could hear Jonathan and Nancy talking under their breath over in the

hot tub, plus the white noise of the old man swimming laps. For a brief moment, all was gentle and quiet.

"What do you miss most about Hawkins?" Nancy asked, careful to keep her voice down. She wasn't enthralled with the idea of Mike eavesdropping on yet another private conversation.

Jonathan shrugged. "Honestly? The developing room at Hawkins High. There isn't one at my new school and I haven't been able to find one anywhere in town, either. I have a bunch of great pictures but I can't do anything with them as of now."

"So..." Nancy said teasingly, "not me? You love your photos more than you love me? That's fine, I see how it is."

Jonathan laughed and wrapped his arm around her shoulder. "Got me there," he joked.

"Maybe we can find you a developing room to use here in Smarton," Nancy suggested. It's a big town. I'm sure we could poke around and dig up something."

"That would be great," Jonathan admitted. "I could go over early Sunday morning and let you and the kids sleep in."

"Or..." Nancy suggested, "you could let me come with you. I promise I would be quiet. I wouldn't mess you up or anything." She sighed. "I just...need to be with you. It's been a month and I'm still haven't gotten used to you not being around. Every time I go to school, I feel like you're behind me. And then you're not." Her voice began to break as a tear slid down her face.

Jonathan reached up and put a hand on her cheek, resting his forehead against hers. "Hey, hey," he said gently. "Yeah, of course you can come with me. It'll be a date. I can show you how to develop your own pictures."

Though her throat was still tight, Nancy nodded and said, "Sounds good."

They settled back into the pool, Jonathan's hand still resting on her shoulder. "I like hanging out with no responsibilities," Nancy said,

trying her best to stop her voice from shaking.

"No school, no Hawkins post," Jonathan mused.

"No monsters trying to kill us and the kids," Nancy added.

Jonathan nodded. "Yeah, yeah, that part is kind of nice."

They smiled, relaxing into each other. The jetted water was soothing, frothing around them. Nancy wished she could stay there forever, forget about whatever Mike and El were doing in the pool behind them, and rest her head on Jonathan's shoulder until she died.

Their peace was interrupted by the sudden creak of the pool door opening. Both of them looked up from the water, then dropped their jaws in shock.

"Murray?" Nancy said incredulously.

The bald man looked towards them and immediately smacked his palm against his forehead. "No, no, no," he groaned. "No!"

"Good to see you, too," Jonathan mumbled, looking uncertainly at the man. The two of them rose from their seated position and waded to the other side to talk to their acquaintances more easily.

The stress on Murray's face was limitless. His forehead lines were deep and defined as he paced back and forth on the pool deck. "No offense," he muttered, coming close to them, "but you kids are some of the very last people I wanted to see right now. The last! I chose the dinkiest, most run down hotel I could find in the most generic town in Michigan. No, but of course you're here. I never catch a break, do I?"

"Sorry, what are you talking about?" Nancy asked sharply. "Did we do something wrong?"

"Yes," Murray hissed. "You have done everything wrong. You," he said, jabbing a finger at Jonathan, "should have stayed in your new town. And never taken that little girl anywhere other than that town. And you," he said, poking his other finger at Nancy, "should have remembered that you are constantly being watched. Your phones are

tapped. You guys didn't plan this by writing letters did you? Huh? Yeah, I didn't think so."

The two teenagers stood in shocked silence. "Should we be worried about something?" Nancy asked, glaring daggers at Murray.

"You should always be worried, Nancy," the man said tiredly, rubbing the bridge of his nose. "But especially now. Especially here. We need to get the hell out of here."

0

0

0

A new level of intrigue! This was originally just going to be something cute and fluffy, but Murray is one of my absolute favorite characters and I wanted to add him here somewhere. One thing led to another, and now this is going to be a lot more detailed and intense than I first thought! Hopefully you guys all like it :)

8. Dammit, Murray

Shivering and wet, the four kids piled into Murray's room, down in the very lowest floor.

"I didn't even know you could get a room that was this far down," Jonathan said, plopping down on the couch next to Nancy.

Murray shook his head, pouring a bottle of vodka into a clear glass. "You can't," he said. "Nobody can. Not unless they know somebody and know exactly how to convince that somebody to get them a room in the damn basement."

"Who are you?" Mike asked. "How do you know my sister and Jonathan?"

For the first time, a smile cracked Murray's face. "Good question," he said with a subtle glance at the teenagers sitting on the couch. "It's always good to question the Man. In their case, they were looking for a way to put information out into the world. I helped them with that, then watered down some vodka for them and lent Nancy my guest bedroom. And Jonathan slept on the pull-out in my study." He grinned wickedly at them, prompting both to share a glance and roll their eyes.

"What's funny?" El whispered in Mike's ear.

"I have a feeling Jonathan didn't actually end up sleeping on the pull-out," Mike whispered back.

"Oh," El mouthed, though she still seemed confused.

"Oh is right, little lady," Murray said, reclining into his seat. "Oh is very right. Now. Let's get down to business." He stared at Jonathan. "I've been trying to find a safe way to contact your mother for weeks," he said. "No luck. Not until I heard about this place."

"This place?" Nancy repeated. "What's so special about this place?"

"Nothing," Murray replied. He took a long sip from his cup before slamming it down on the table. "Absolutely nothing. That's why it

was perfect for what I wanted to do."

"Which is..." Jonathan prompted.

"Send a coded letter. From "Mary Bowmen." I had everything planned out. I'd tell her I was a reporter in Hawkins looking for insider information on the alleged government cover ups. Mention that there was a cute little town called Smarton on the way. She'd have figured it out. She's smart. Unlike you shithheads. You've messed up everything."

Nancy rose to her feet. "Can you stop throwing accusations like a child and tell us what this is all about?"

"Fortunately for you, I can," Murray finally conceded. He nodded at her. "I can see you're still the spirited one. Good for you."

Nancy didn't respond, only raising an eyebrow and returning to her seat next to Jonathan.

"Now here's the thing. You remember all those Russians that invaded Hawkins last summer?" He waved his hand in their direction. "Of course you do. Well, rumor has it they're up to something nasty. Again. Nothing major. More of a revenge mission. They're looking for all of those responsible for their failure in your town."

"So...like us?" Mike asked, his expression turning sour.

"Uh, yeah," Murray replied. "Like you. Especially your mom," he said, pointing at Jonathan, "and you." He moved his finger to rest on El's forehead. "Anybody else involved is just an added bonus."

He began to pace around the room, still sipping from his glass. "You were safe in Hawkins," he muttered. "All of you. I don't know what Joyce was thinking. Nobody could do shit to you guys. Not without drawing further attention to that hellhole. Luckily, you Byers dropped of the grid when you moved away. And now look what you've done."

"I thought we got rid of the Russians," Jonathan said, shooting Murray a confused look.

If looks could kill, the withering glare that the bearded man sent back would have vaporized Jonathan on the spot. "Yes, Jonathan," Murray drawled. "We got rid of every single Russian on the face of this planet. Do svidaniya, comrades."

"That's enough," Nancy said with an eye roll. "So you're telling us that whoever is left of the people that were in Hawkins last year have been watching us. And now that we've left the safety of our homes, they're tracking us?"

Murray nodded, tapping one finger to the side of his head. "Bright girl. And now, because they have eyes on you, they'll have seen me. So thanks a lot." He sighed deeply. "The only thing we can do now is hope they somehow missed the fact that you and your brother skipped town. Lay low, don't leave the hotel, and don't come back to this room once you leave."

He looked Jonathan and El up and down. "You two...it would probably be best if you went back to Hawkins after this. I don't want anybody finding Joyce and jeopardizing everything I've been working for."

"What are we going to tell her?" Jonathan asked.

"Leave that to me," Murray said, tilting his head back to force the last of the alcohol in his cup into his mouth. "Now, you kids had better get back to your rooms."

He grinned suddenly, shattering the somber atmosphere that he'd created. "Let me guess," he said slyly, looking pointedly at Mike's arm around El. "You guys are just friends, aren't you?"

"Let's go," Nancy said, yanking Mike's wrist and rising off the couch. "He's right, it's getting late." She looked up and offered a derisive smile at Murray. "Always a pleasure talking with you Murray."

"Pleasure is right," the man said, eyeing her and Jonathan. "You should be thanking me."

"Goodnight," Jonathan said firmly, following the rest of them out the door and slamming it shut behind him.

0

0

0

Yikes.

9. They Sleep Together!

Just wanted to start off by saying THANK YOU to everyone that is being so supportive of this! I'm having so much fun developing the story and have a lot of high expectations for the future. I read every review and they literally make my day. Also, anything in a foreign language will have a translation at the bottom. Just a heads up ;)

0

0

0

After checking in with Mike and El, Nancy returned to her and Jonathan's room. She closed the door firmly behind her, then slammed the back of her head against it. She didn't move from that spot, squeezing her eyes shut and trying to calm herself down.

Jonathan came out of the bathroom, then halted when he saw Nancy frozen against the door, her mouth pursed in a line.

"You OK, Nance?" he asked hesitantly, approaching her.

She sniffed. "No," she said, her voice on the verge of breaking. "I'm not OK. All I wanted was to have a normal weekend alone with you. And then my brother tagged along and then Murray tagged along and now it looks like even the damn Russians have tagged along." A tear spilled from her eye. "Don't we deserve to be regular teenagers for once?" she asked. "This isn't fair."

"I know," Jonathan said, coming over to her and pressing his forehead against hers. "I know it's not. But look, it is what it is. Yeah, we're going to get in trouble with our parents. Absolutely. But at least my mom and Will are going to be safe."

Nancy nodded. "And hopefully we'll make it back to Hawkins before anything terrible happens."

"I won't let anything terrible happen to you," Jonathan promised,

pulling Nancy into his arms. He reached up and stroked her hair, letting her lean against him. Even when his shoulder started becoming wet with her tears, he didn't let go. He couldn't help but feel grateful in that moment, though his world was falling apart for the fourth time in two years.

At last, Nancy let out a shaking, shuddering sigh. She stepped away from Jonathan and offered him a small smile. "Isn't this great?" she asked, wiping furiously at her face. "It's just like old times. We're in mortal danger and have no way of knowing what's about to happen next."

Jonathan tilted his head, the corners of his mouth twitching. "Well," he said, "do we ever really know what's going to happen next?" He inched closer to her. "For instance, you don't know that I'm about to do this."

He leaned forward and pressed his lips against hers. For a moment, she stayed still, unsure of how to react.

On the one hand, she was probably being tracked by a fleet of elite Russian spies, sent to capture her and torture everyone she loved.

On the other hand, she hadn't seen Jonathan in a month.

Finally, she reciprocated the kiss, wrapping her arms around his neck. She felt him smile under her lips, and she couldn't help but smile back. In that moment, it was as if she were touching him for the first time all over again. Their kisses became more passionate, more longing. Nancy traced her thumb along Jonathan's cheekbone.

Slowly, they made their way back towards the bed, refusing to let go of each other. They sank down on top of the covers, engulfing themselves in the fire that linked them together. Somewhere between kisses, Nancy reached over and turned out the lamp next to the bed.

0

0

0

"I don't even want to think about what's going on over there," Mike announced, grimacing at the wall. He walked over to the desk on the far side of the room and started looking through the drawers, sipping a plastic bottle of water he'd brought from home.

"What are you doing?" El asked, peering over at him from her bed.

Mike slammed one of the drawers shut. "I'm looking for hidden cameras," he told her. "Just in case the Russians have this room tapped. I'm not planning on getting kidnapped any time soon."

"Oh," El said softly. She looked down at the ground, unsure of what to say next. Then she looked up and tilted her head towards the wall separating their room and the older kids'. "What are they doing?"

Mike made a choked sound, then spit out the bit of water that was in his mouth. "Uh...you know. Gross teenager stuff."

"Like kissing?"

Mike's eyes widened. "Oh. Oh, you probably never even heard about...oh. Well, you wouldn't have. Brenner was a son of a bitch that didn't care about you and Hopper couldn't even give us a proper boundaries talk."

El raised an eyebrow.

"Well," Mike said, his face flourishing into a brilliant pink, "when two p-people love each other a lot-"

"Like you and me," El interrupted.

If possible, Mike's blush became even darker. He stared firmly at the ground. "Well, sort of. Anyway, they, uh...they sleep together."

Judging by the confused expression that El offered him, Mike could tell she didn't get it. He sighed, kicking the base of the desk. "Forget it," he said. "Maybe Nancy can tell you in the morning."

"Ok," El decided, pulling the covers up and falling onto her pillow. "Goodnight, Mike."

"Goodnight, El," he responded, coming over and crawling into his own bed. Reaching over to the night stand that separated them, he yanked on the cord and turned out the light.

Minutes passed, yet he couldn't find himself becoming any more tired. Perhaps it was the looming threat of being kidnapped and beaten that kept him up.

El's soft voice suddenly piped up. "Mike?" she asked hesitantly. "Can we sleep together?"

If Mike had still been drinking his water, he would have spilled it all over the hotel floor. He felt his mind clamp up, unable to process or spew out anything comprehensive. "Uh...s-sure. I guess," he finally managed.

He heard the soft pattering of footsteps, then saw the vague outline of El climbing into bed with him. She pulled herself under the covers and nestled up close to Mike. "I love you," she said quietly.

Mike didn't respond, only stared at the ceiling and felt a smile spread across his face. Within a few short minutes, both he and El were fast asleep.

0

0

0

Murray was passed out in the recliner, a half empty bottle of Smirnoff in his hands. Though his face was impassive, he tossed and turned restlessly in his sleep. "Corn Dog," he murmured. "Get your...corn dog."

The door to his room burst open with a deafening thud. "Вон он, этот сукин сын," * growled the man who had kicked it down. "Хватай его!" **

Murray's head shot up immediately. "Alexei?" he asked sleepily. Then he caught a glimpse of the five angry men approaching him, guns in hand and pointed at his head.

"Oh, motherf-"

0

0

0

* "There's the son of a bitch!"

** "Get him!"

Loved writing this chapter! Nancy and Jonathan are super cute, as always. And I LOVE the misunderstanding El has with 'sleeping together'. I felt like that conversation was very on-brand for Mike and El. Thank you again for every kind word that's been said!

10. Nothing Goes Wrong

Mike and El sat together in the downstairs lobby, munching quietly on their waffles. All around them, people ate and talked, providing a blanket of white noise that allowed Mike's brain to function normally again.

"How do you like it?" Mike asked, gesturing at El's waffle.

She shrugged. "Not an eggo," she said. "But still good."

Mike smiled at her.

"Hey, kids," came a voice from across the lobby. Mike looked up to see Nancy and Jonathan walking towards them, his arm across her shoulder. Nancy's hair was pulled up in a messy bun, strands falling out every which way. Mike couldn't help notice that Jonathan's shirt was on backwards.

He raised an eyebrow. "How was your night?"

"Put a sock in it," Nancy replied, taking a seat. She reached over and grabbed one of the strawberries from Mike's plate. "What's our game plan?"

"No need to be so rude," Mike grumbled.

Jonathan shrugged, taking a sip of water. "How was your guys' night, then?" he asked with a flippant smile at Mike.

"We slept together," El mentioned casually.

Water suddenly spewed across the table, leaving Mike grabbing for the napkin and dabbing his face furiously with it. "Calm down," he said irritably. "She didn't mean that. We just slept in the same bed."

"Sorry," Jonathan said, wiping his lips. "I didn't expect to hear my sister say that for a few more years."

After breakfast, they moved back to their rooms, congregating in Mike and El's. To be safe, Nancy secured the door with a 'Do Not

Disturb' sign. They sat, facing each other on the beds.

"Do we want to go back and check on Murray before we leave?" Jonathan asked. "It seems risky, but I don't just want to leave him."

"I'm sure he wouldn't mind," Mike said. "He really doesn't strike me as the sentimental type."

Nancy nodded. "He seemed to want us out of here as soon as possible. I'd say we leave now while we haven't been stopped. Maybe we can give him a call later," she suggested.

The others looked around at each other and agreed.

"Same car arrangements as last time?" Jonathan affirmed.

"Sure," Mike replied.

"Let's go," El urged.

The four of them grabbed the rest of their stuff and began to make their way out of the hotel. The hallways were practically deserted, making their departure quick and efficient. Yet Nancy couldn't help but glance over her shoulder at each turn, begging that she didn't see a group of armed soldiers marching towards them.

Finally they reached the lobby. Jonathan stayed back with Mike and El while Nancy approached the front desk, keys in hand.

"Hi," she said, smiling at the woman sitting at the front desk.

The receptionist looked surprised. "I wasn't expecting to see you until tomorrow afternoon," she said. "What brings you down here?"

"We need to check out earlier than we thought," Nancy explained. "Our...parents found out we came here and they're kind of mad." She put on her best guilty face, hoping it would be enough to get the receptionist off her case.

The woman laughed. "I see how it is. In that case, I'll just need you to follow me into the back room to settle the refund," she explained, getting up from her chair.

As the two of them walked around the desk towards the dimly lit hallway behind it, Jonathan stepped forward. "Nance," he called, his expression hesitant and cautious.

She turned around and raised her eyebrows in questioning.

"Just..." he mumbled. "Be safe."

She nodded and shot him one last smile before turning around and following the receptionist into the back hallway.

The pacing began. Jonathan couldn't seem to control himself as he marched back and forth between the two tables on either side of the lobby. His eyebrows furrowed deeply over his eyes, casting a dark shadow on his face.

"Hey," El said, coming up to him and putting a hand on his shoulder. "She'll be fine."

Jonathan offered a weak smile at his little sister. "Thanks, El," he said. "I just think at least one of us should have gone, too. I feel like we abandoned her."

"We should go check on her," Mike said, rising to his feet. "I don't want anything bad to happen. My parents would blame me. Or you," he admitted pointing at Jonathan. "It's in our best interests to go and make sure she's OK."

Jonathan nodded. "Alright," he breathed. "Alright. Follow me and don't stray too far."

Together, the three of them walked quickly through the lobby and into the hallway behind it. The lights were dimly lit, as if they'd been running without stop for weeks on end. Each step they took was muffled by the thick carpet beneath their feet.

"That must be it," Mike murmured, pointing at the only door in sight. They walked towards it cautiously, not daring to make a sound.

When they finally reached it, Mike reached out his hand and touched the doorknob carefully. After nothing immediately jumped out at them, Mike pulled the door all the way open, revealing a practically

empty room.

Practically empty except for Nancy, lying limp on the ground.

El let out a muffled scream, while Jonathan raced to her side. He collapsed to his knees and cradled her head in his hands. "She's hurt," he informed, his voice husky and charged with panic. "We need to get the hell out of here." He gently lifted her into his arms, careful not to jostle her in any way that would hurt her more.

But before they could leave, the door was suddenly blocked by a group of people, regular hotel guests and staff. The lifeguard and the man swimming laps from the pool. The receptionist. The couple that had stayed in the room across the hall.

"Отведи их в отбор. Только без увечий," * the receptionist ordered. Together, the group of people moved towards the four kids, casually pulling guns from their coats.

Mike raised his hands in the air, stepping in front of El. Jonathan did his best to turn his body and shield Nancy from any attack.

"Follow us and we won't kill your curly headed friend," the man from the pool said with a pointed glance at Nancy. "But if you fight back we may be forced to do something we'll regret." He twirled his gun in his hand as if it were a baton.

Mike, Jonathan, and El shared a panicked look. "We have no choice," Jonathan sighed, shaking his head. His breath was labored from the stress and from supporting Nancy for so long. "We're in no shape to fight back."

So they reluctantly fell into line behind the Russians. Jonathan held Nancy tighter to him, while Mike gripped El's hand like his life depended on it. The darkness of the hallway soon swallowed them whole.

0

0

0

*** Bring them out back, but don't hurt them.**

This is so exciting! Obviously not for them, but at least the story is really picking up pace! Thanks again to all of you leaving reviews!

11. Mothertrucker

Going to preface this with an apology that this was so late compared to the other chapters! I'm going to have limited access to my computer from here on out, so it might be longer increments between chapters :(I'm really sad; I loved the momentum the story was gaining but I guess some is better than nothing ㄟ(ˊˋ)ㄟ

0

0

0

When Nancy opened her eyes, she was not in the bare, dark room in which she had been assaulted. Instead she was tied to a seat in an even darker room. The room seemed to be moving, jostling every few seconds. She tried to wiggle the chair, but soon found that it was bolted firmly to the ground.

"Jonathan?" she whispered, looking around in the dark.

She heard a soft intake of breath from across the room. "Nance, I'm here," he called back softly. "I'm here."

"I'm here, too," Mike said. "And El."

Nancy scrunched her eyebrows in concern. "Wh...where are we?" she asked, still drowsy from the deep slumber she had been in.

"Truck," El replied. "We were attacked."

Groaning, Nancy tilted her face back. A roaring headache was pounding at her skull, reminding her over and over again the feeling of the blow driven to the back of her head. "I'm sorry I was so careless," she muttered. "I never suspected the receptionist for a minute. I should have been there to help you guys fight."

"Hey, we were outnumbered," Jonathan argued. "You couldn't have helped us. I'm just glad they knocked you out instead of...worse."

"Me too," Nancy murmured.

The truck continued to rumble along the freeway, providing much needed background noise. The four kids sat to themselves, thinking and worrying and starting to lapse into a full on panic.

"How long have we been in here?" Nancy asked suddenly.

She could practically see Jonathan glancing up as he always did when he was thinking. "Maybe an hour. It's kind of hard to keep track of time."

They sat in silence after that. Though Nancy couldn't move her arms or upper body, her legs were more or less loose. She reached out and began to feel around the space in front of her. When she finally found Jonathan's foot, she rested her own on top of his. It wasn't much, but somehow the contact grounded her just a little more than before.

After what felt like an eternity, the truck came to a grinding halt. The four kids looked around furiously, trying to catch a glimpse of anything in the dark.

The door finally lifted, letting out a grinding noise and releasing blinding light into the back of the truck. A large man holding a gun stepped up and into the back. About a dozen other soldiers were on the ground behind him.

"Hello, children," he said, his accent heavy and clipped. "Much appreciation for travelling all this way. My name is Aleksandr Finklestein, but you will address me as 'General'." As he walked towards them, eyeing each and every detail, his gaze caught on Nancy and Jonathan's touching feet. His face contorted into what appeared to be mock endearment.

"That is simply...adorable," ** he simpered. "My apologies for breaking up the honeymoon." He signaled something to the soldiers waiting behind him. "отпустить их," he commanded.

The men immediately stormed up into the truck and grabbed El roughly by the shoulders. She whimpered and struggled, but nothing happened. For the moment, her powers were still missing in action.

"Stop," Jonathan growled.

"Get your filthy hands off of her," Mike yelled, spitting on the ground at the feet of Aleksandr. "Don't touch her."

The man raised his eyebrows, his expression disgustingly bemused. "You are a fighter *and* a lover, I see," he said. "I did not realize how full of affection this truck was."

After El was safely out of her seat and in the hands of the several russian guards that had been assigned to her, they moved on to Jonathan, treating him with significantly less care and gentleness that had been used with El. They yanked him to his feet, cuffing him in the side of his head when he hissed a curse at them.

"Stop it," Nancy cried, struggling against the cords binding her in place.

Aleksandr rolled his eyes. "At first it was cute, but now just annoying," he groaned. "заставить ее замолчать," * he barked. Immediately, one of the younger guards produced a strip of thick fabric and forced it into Nancy's mouth. They tied it tightly behind her head, yanking her curly blond hair out of place. She let out a soft yelp of pain through the gag.

Jonathan tried to break out of his bonds. "You're hurting her," he grunted, pushing against the men holding him in place.

"I know," Aleksandr said with a small shrug. "Believe me, this is nothing compared to what is in store." He smiled then, a wide and unnatural gesture. It caught the kids off guard, and for a moment, they stopped struggling.

Soon each of them was untied, placed in the hands of two or more guards. The struggling had gone down after a while, but not before Jonathan had placed a mean punch at one of the guards. His hands were now bound behind his back.

"If you'll follow me," Aleksandr said, "you'll be shown to your rooms. Hopefully you find them to be quite...hospitable." He chuckled, nudging the officer next to him, who began to laugh as well.

The kids were led through a series of tunnels and hallways, each lined with glowing mechanisms, cold machinery, and guards armed to the teeth. Though each of them was frightened beyond belief, it was still an enticing view. Nancy found herself memorizing each hallway, each turn they took out of sheer appreciation for the sights.

After a long and steep stairway into the bottom-most layer of the bunker, they found themselves face to face with two sets of hard, iron bars. Aleksandr stepped forward and procured a large ring of keys. He stuck one of them into the lock and swung open the door with a loud creak.

"Home sweet home," he grinned maliciously. "This one is for the lovebirds, ya? Good old fashioned cell. Have fun with the rest of your Honeymoon."

He gestured at the guards holding Jonathan and Nancy, who shoved the two teenagers roughly into the cell. As Jonathan's hands were bound behind his back, he fell to the ground with no way to prop himself back up. Nancy immediately sank to her feet and helped him into a sitting position.

"Have fun," Aleksandr called with a wave of his fingers. Then he slammed the door shut, leaving them clinging to each other in the darkness.

The tall General turned to Mike and El, each cowering beneath his gaze. "And here we have Mop Head and Miss Magic. Though, according to what I've been told, her powers are...on hold. Such a shame."

He nodded to the guards, who threw Mike into the cell with the same reckless force that Nancy and Jonathan had endured. The men holding El seemed about to do the same, when Aleksandr held up a finger.

"Not her," he commanded. "She and I are going on a little walk."

0

0

* "Silence her"

Oh no! Of course it always comes back to the Russians. Poor Hawkins people can't get a moment of peace. Hopefully y'all enjoyed the little Jancy and Mileven moments I snuck in! I always think it's cutest when they're in mortal danger.

12. Chapter Twelve

"Mike," Nancy called desperately, scrambling to the edge of the cell. Instead of a solid wall, she found the same bars that blocked their exit. As her eyes adjusted to the darkness, she could make out her little brother, curled into a ball in the back corner. At the sound of his name, his head perked up and he made his way towards Nancy and Jonathan.

"They took her," he said. "They took El. I don't know what they're planning on doing to her."

Nancy took her little brother's hand and squeezed it in hers. Her other hand found Jonathan's. "I'm sure that El is going to be just fine," she reassured, speaking both to her brother and to Jonathan. "They need her."

But as soon as she said that, a heart wrenching scream echoed through the dark hallways. It wasn't long or loud, but it was enough to tell them that it was El. Mike stiffened, gripping Nancy's hand tighter.

"Stop," El cried, her voice ragged and distant. "Please, stop."

Mike sniffled. "We have to do something," he begged, tears streaming down his face. Next to her, Nancy could feel Jonathan's heavy breathing as he listened to the sounds of his little sister's anguish.

"There's nothing that we can do," Nancy said, her own throat tight. She intertwined her fingers with Mike's and pulled Jonathan close to her. He buried his face in her shoulder.

Another wave of screams wracked their ears. Nancy wished she could somehow block the boys' ears so they didn't have to hear El's suffering anymore. Mike wrenched his hand from hers and scrambled to the door. "El," he screamed. "El, I'm here!"

"Mike," came the desperate, shrieking reply.

The boy clung to the bars, trying to force himself to the other side.

"I'm here," he repeated, his cries breaking down into sobs. He crumpled to the floor of the cell, cradling his head in his hands.

Jonathan shuddered under Nancy's arms. She stroked his hair while calling out for Mike. "Come back," she pleaded, tears starting to fill her own eyes. "Mike, there's nothing we can do."

But Mike stayed slumped on the floor, his shoulders shaking. He pounded the floor with this fist, sending a dull metallic thud around the cells. Every breath he took seemed to trigger a convulsion across his entire body.

Finally, the distant screams came to a stop. Nancy looked up, not ready to believe that it was over. However, as the silent seconds ticked on, it seemed that Aleksandr had finally had his fill.

Jonathan sat up straight, still clutching Nancy's hand. "Is it done?" he asked, voice husky.

"It's done," she breathed.

She glanced towards Mike, still collapsed on the floor. "El," he murmured, barely understandable. "El."

Nancy had never seen her brother in a state like this. It was painful to look at, like she was intruding on a personal moment. "Mike," she called out again. "Please come back over here. It's over."

Slowly, the boy lifted himself up off the ground. He stood, shaky and unstable, and walked back to join the others.

Before he could reach them, though, the door to his cell was flung open. Standing in the frame was Aleksandr and a broken looking El. Her lip was bleeding, her eyes were dull, and everything about her screamed pain.

"You bastard," Mike shrieked, throwing himself towards Aleksandr. "I'll kill you! I'll kill you for what you did." He threw his fists against the man's chest, much the same way that he had when Hopper had revealed that he had kept El hidden. Except this time, there was no embrace.

The General let out a soft snort. "Adorable attempt," he conceded. "But that's all for now. Da svidaniya, Americans." He shoved El's back, throwing her into the cell.

Once the door was firmly shut, Mike rushed to her side. He sank to his knees, crying out in anguish. "Are you OK?" he whispered, pulling her onto her side. "What did he do to you?"

"Hurt," was all she could manage.

Jonathan pressed his face up to the bars separating their cells. "El, I'm here, too," he called. "Take it easy."

"Jonathan," El breathed. She took a deep inhale, then let it out. Soon, she appeared to be fast asleep.

0

0

0

:(

This one was hard to write. It's always difficult when characters you care about go through hard things, but this was especially sad. Especially seeing Mike's perspective. As always, it would be amazing if you could drop a quick review! Thanks for all the support!

13. The Good, The Bad, and The Trash

GUYS! I MESSED UP! I accidentally posted a chapter that was way, way different than the one that was supposed to be posted. It made no sense, but it will later. That's so awkward. Ignore the chapter where Jonathan and El escape. This is what is supposed to come next!

They had no way of knowing how much time had passed. Every few hours, they were brought a plate full of sparse food and two glasses of water. The one time that Nancy demanded the guard tell them what day or hour it was, he had simply laughed and slammed the door shut.

Now they were asleep. Mike and El were curled up together next to the door, both peacefully resting without any disturbances. Jonathan was passed out, his head in Nancy's lap, after a few hours of fitful tossing and turning. She absentmindedly ran her fingers through his hair, trying to fall asleep herself.

"Nancy?" came a soft, small voice. The girl looked up and saw El on the other side of the bars, still weak from her previous encounter.

"What is it?" Nancy responded quietly, so as not to wake Mike or Jonathan.

El screwed her face up. "What is...sleeping together?"

Despite the situation, Nancy let out a little laugh. She gently eased Jonathan's head off of her legs, then crawled over to meet the younger girl. "See, when two people really care about each other..." she lowered her voice further as she continued so that there was no chance of either boy overhearing.

When she was finished, El's eyes were as wide as saucers. "That's..." she stammered. "Oh."

"Yeah," Nancy said with an understanding smile. "Crazy, isn't it?"

"And you..." El began, her eyes flickering to Jonathan. Nancy laughed

out loud.

"Uh, yeah."

There was a stretch of awkward silence. El offered a grateful yet conflicted smile, then turned back to Mike. She laid down next to him, laying one arm around his shoulders. Nancy waited a moment to see if anything else happened, then returned to her original position.

Before she could let herself drift away, there was a loud banging noise from outside the cell. Nancy's head snapped up, instinctively clutching Jonathan's shoulder. She looked through the darkness and saw Mike and El still clinging to each other, now starting to wake up.

"Nance?" came Jonathan's incoherent murmur as the banging outside continued.

She looked down at him. "Something's happening," she said, helping him sit up. "I think somebody's coming in."

"Probably just food again," Jonathan mumbled.

But when the door swung open, it wasn't the familiar face of the guard they'd come to expect. Instead, it was two younger guards with uniforms a bit too big for them. One was a pleasant faced young man with curly dark brown hair and just the very beginnings of stubble. The other was a woman with cheekbones that looked like they could slice someone's throat. She grinned at Nancy and Jonathan, though the smile didn't reach her eyes.

"Aleksandr told me they were sweet," she mentioned to the man, her accent lighter than most. "Too bad."

"What's too bad?" Nancy asked defiantly.

The woman stalked into the cell and gripped Jonathan's arm, forcing him to his feet. "I see you've been untied," she said. Then she turned back to the other man and said, "он не безобразный. если бы это была другая ситуация, я бы украл его у сучки." *

The man rolled his eyes. "Just get them and you can go, Nataliya," he reminded her.

Nancy got to her feet and approached the woman holding Jonathan in her grip. "Where are you taking us?" she asked.

"I'm taking Jonathan and that little girl over there up your mom's asshole," the woman replied with a smirk. "You and your brother are going with Yegor over here."

"You're splitting us up?" Jonathan asked, his jaw trembling slightly.

Nataliya cupped her hand around his chin. "You're too cute," she mused. "Yes, we are taking you away from your friends. Promise me you won't cry about it."

"Cut it out," Yegor muttered. He took Nancy's hands and bound them together behind her back. "I'm sorry about the hospitality you've been shown," he said. "Hopefully things will look up for you soon."

Once everyone was bound and had a gun to the back of their heads, they began their march into the inner workings of the building. With each step, Nancy's heart beat faster than before. She glanced over at Mike, who sent her a grimace.

"This is where we part ways," Nataliya announced when they reached a split in the tunnel. "You'll have time to say your goodbyes." For a moment, the kids all drifted towards each other, then were forced apart.

"Just kidding," Nataliya laughed coldly. She grabbed Jonathan and El by the collars and marched them down the right hallway.

"Sorry about that," Yegor said with a frown. "Nataliya is kind of a stony person."

Nancy and Mike didn't respond, instead staring in silent misery after their friends. Mike felt a tear slide down his face.

"We'd just found them again," he choked. "And now they're being taken away all over again. But now we...we can't call or visit."

Nancy bit her lip. Though she was distressed beyond belief, the sinking feeling of dread was not unfamiliar to her. In fact, she was almost used to the pit in her stomach and the tingles racing down her

spine.

Yegor led them for hours, it seemed, with no sign of stopping. They walked in solemn silence, nobody daring to say a word. Nancy and Mike walked close enough that their shoulders touched, offering each other a minimal amount of comfort. Nancy thought back to the arguments they'd had on the way there, everything suddenly seeming trivial and ridiculous.

Suddenly, Yegor pulled them into a dark room. He turned both Nancy and Mike to look at him, an urgent look suddenly on his face. "Listen, you two," he said, his voice hard and suddenly without a trace of accent. "You're going to go through this chute. It's going to lead to the dumpster right outside this facility. Once there, run as fast as you can down the highway. You'll recognize it. Go to Hawkins and call Dr. Owens. I work for him."

"You...what?" Mike asked skeptically.

Yegor huffed desperately. "Come on, guys. Work with me."

Nancy squinted. "What's your proof?" she asked. "How do we know this isn't going to send us to some torture device and extract our memories and shit?"

"You're smart," Yeogr admitted. "But, Nancy, listen. We don't have much time. I need to make it seem like you're both in your new cells. If all goes according to plan, Dr. Owens will be able to save your friends and burn this place to the ground."

Mike shook his head. "Why don't you just call him, Yegor?"

Yegor whimpered. "Mike. You're killing me, dude. They're tracing every call out of this place. They hear me fess up to Sam, they kill me and move the whole operation. If I run away, they do the same. It has to be you guys."

"Fine," Nancy conceded, moving towards the chute.

"Are you crazy?" Mike hissed.

Nancy hesitated. "Yeah," she said slowly. "I guess I am." Then she

flung herself down the tunnel, disappearing from view.

"She's smart," Yegor repeated. "Look, Mike, think about it this way. You at least have a chance now. Sure, maybe it's just leading to torture. But maybe...maybe it's freedom. For you and for Eleven. Before, you had nothing. Now there's hope."

Mike rolled his eyes. "Alright, alright, I get it," he muttered. "I'll go."

He took a deep breath and climbed into the garbage chute. Already the smell of trash reached his nose and practically gagged him.

"Good luck," Yegor offered.

The door rattled suddenly, and before Mike knew what was happening, Yegor was shoving him down the chute and into the darkness.

0

0

0

*** He's not ugly. If it were a different situation, I'd steal him from the bitch.**

Yay for Yegor! At least Nancy and Mike are now out of the Russian facility! I know I've said this before but I honestly love writing Mike and Nancy scenes so much. ALSO I realized that there might be some readers out there that actually speak Russian. I'd like to clarify that I don't know any Russian at all. I've been using Google Translate for most of this and I know it shows haha. Sorry!

14. Robin and Steve Skip Work

"What do you think they're doing right now?" Dustin asked, staring up at the ceiling. He had a book on his chest with no intention of opening it.

"Don't know, don't really care," Max replied. She was leaned against the bed Dustin was collapsed across, doodling on his Etch a Sketch.

Lucas leaned over and took a look at her artwork. "Is that Dustin?" he asked, staring in confusion at the scribble she had produced. "Or...is it the Mind Flayer?"

She scowled at him, slapping the toy against his stomach so hard he let out a gasp of pain. "No, idiot," she complained. "It's obviously Spiderman and MJ. Look, he's swinging." She pointed to an illegible blob that Lucas supposed could, if interpreted correctly, be Peter Parker and his girlfriend.

The door to Dustin's room slammed open. Robin and Steve stood in the doorway, dressed in khakis and matching polo shirts. "Hey, Henderson," Steve barked. "Come on. We're going to be late for work. Do you want us to drop you at Church or not?"

"Church?" Lucas and Max exclaimed in unison.

Dustin adjusted his tie, climbing out of bed. "Yeah," he said with a toothy smile. "I'm going to one of those Mormon churches. Susie said all visitors were welcome, so I'm checking it out."

Lucas rolled his eyes. "You're insane," he commented.

"Completely," Max added. "Does this mean we have to leave your house now?"

"It does unless you want to spend your Sunday afternoon with my mom and Mews Two," Dustin shrugged.

As the five of them started to make their way out of the room, the clatter of the front door slamming sounded downstairs.

"Mom?" Dustin called. "Is that you?"

"Dustin," came an urgent, familiar voice. "Are Lucas and Max there?"

They all stared at each other for a moment, then surged downstairs.

When they arrived in the Living Room, they found Mike and Nancy, looking as though they'd rolled around in a dumpster for a few hours. Their clothes were sweaty and stained, while their hair flew in every direction. Nancy's perm had transformed into a lion's mane.

"Nance?" Steve asked, frowning.

She looked at him, tears suddenly welling in her eyes. "Steve," she mouthed, unable to speak. Both her and Mike seemed as though they could collapse from exhaustion at any minute.

"Sit down," Dustin urged, taking Nancy and Mike by the arms and leading them to the plush couch. They plopped down, neither uttering a word.

Dustin sat down in the chair across from them. "What happened to you guys?" he asked. "You look like you've been in prison the whole weekend. With garbage duty." He had meant the comment as a joke, but as he looked at the glance the Wheeler kids shared, he realized he had hit closer to the mark than intended.

"Shit," Lucas muttered. "Why do I get the feeling we're about to get roped into something crazy and completely illegal?"

0

0

0

"And the last we saw of them...they were being dragged down the hallway by the crazy Russian girl," Mike finished. "We don't know what happened to them. They could be dead or tortured for all we know."

"Well, there's really only one thing to do," Robin said, speaking for

the first time.

Everyone turned to look at her.

She raised her hands in the air. "Call Sam," she said defensively.

"Sam?" Mike asked incredulously. "You're on a first name basis with one of the most reknowned scientists of the area, the man who's helped kill monsters and essentially take down an entire branch of tactical geniuses?"

"Uh...yeah?" Robin answered, snapping her gum.

Steve stepped in. "Last summer, after the whole debacle, we had to go to a bunch of meetings with him," he explained. "After a few weeks it felt weird still calling him Dr. Owens."

"Okay, whatever," Nancy said irritably. "Let's just call him."

Steve and Robin got to their feet and walked over to the telephone, self nominating themselves to be the representatives. Nobody argued, though Nancy and Mike sent them a few glances.

"So how was El doing?" Max asked. "You know, before getting kidnapped by Russians and physically tortured to the point of almost passing out."

"She's doing well, I think," Mike replied. "I mean, she's happy. Mostly. Obviously she misses everybody. But the Byers have been treating her well. She and Jonathan seemed a lot closer than before."

Dustin turned to Nancy. "Oh yeah," he said, sounding less as though he were interested and more as though he were asking out of politness. "How's Jonathan?"

She shrugged. "Same as ever." With a sigh, she hoisted herself off the couch. "I'm going to go help out Steve and Robin. Make sure they don't get anything wrong." Without a glance back, she walked into the kitchen.

Lucas and Max shared a wide eyed look. "I think the time spent in the dumpster did something to her attitude," Max said.

"Yeah, either that or the fact that she was knocked out, kidnapped, thrown in a prison cell, then forced to watch her boyfriend get dragged away by some crazy Russian military personel," Mike snapped back.

Max held up her hands in surrender. "Geez, OK," she muttered.

"Sorry," Mike said, throwing his head in his hands. "It's just hard, you know? We're scared. Each of us has one of the most important people in the world to us trapped in that place."

Lucas put a hand on his shoulder. "It's gonna OK, dude," he said with a smile.

Try as he might, Mike couldn't smile back.

0

0

0

I'm so glad that they're back in Hawkins! I love all these characters with my whole heart. While this will be mainly focused on Jonathan, Nancy, Mike, Eleven, and their adventures, there will be little snippets of the other kids as well. I have a lot of fun ideas for what they could have in store. As always, please leave a review of what you thought (it could be one sentence, reading them just makes my day)!

15. Child Endangerment

When Jonathan opened his eyes, he was sitting in a completely empty room. The only thing he could see was a blinding white light and a large mirror on the wall. He could also feel himself bound to yet another chair, which was, once again, bolted to the floor.

He couldn't remember much of what had happened after they'd left Nancy and Mike. The Russian guard had brought them around a few more twists and staircases. Then she'd handed El off to another person, much to the chagrin of the kids.

And then...what? He'd been taken into a room, laid out on a table and poked and prodded by scientists in white health masks. But after that, nothing.

The door behind him creaked open. He twisted his head desperately, hoping to see El or even the kinder guard that had taken Mike and Nancy. Instead, it was his two least favorite people: General Aleksandr Finklestein and the crazy guard Nataliya.

"Hello, there, Jonathan," the General said, coming to stand in front of him. Nataliya stood right behind him to the left, wagging her fingers at him.

He frowned. "Where's my sister?" he demanded. "And where's Nancy and Mike?"

"That will come in time," Aleksandr said with a laugh. "For now, we're going to talk all about you. Well, you and your family. How are they? How's little Will adjusting to the new town? What's it called again?"

Jonathan sent him a dry glare. "Nice try," he spat.

"It was worth a shot," Aleksandr said with a shrug. He began to pace back and forth around the room.

Nataliya stepped forward. "Look," she said, "we have your sister. We have your girlfriend. We have your girlfriend's little brother. I don't

know if you care about him at all. But we have him. If you don't comply, there's a good chance that something...not so great happens to them."

"But if I tell you where my Mom and brother are, you'll still have El, Nance, and Mike," Jonathan reasoned, scowling at her.

She turned to Aleksandr. "He's smart," she said with mock praise in her voice.

"Smart never did anything against us," the General said with a dramatic hand gesture. "Brain power can't resist a good old fashioned interrogation." He crouched down in front of Jonathan.

"You have two options," he said. "Either you answer our questions and your girlfriend and her brother go free. Or...you don't answer our questions and you get to watch them die."

Jonathan's eyes widened. "Where is she?" he hissed. "Where is she?"

Aleksandr and Nataliya exchanged a knowing glance. "That's not what we're focusing on here, sweetheart," Nataliya said, her voice sickly sweet. "The question is, are you willing to sacrifice her to save your mother and brother?"

A tear formed in his eye, and Jonathan tilted his face to the ceiling in despair.

Nataliya lifted up a communication device that had been strapped to her shirt. "He's not talking. Start the procedure. Careful, though. We don't want them all the way dead."

"Wait," Jonathan called desperately, hanging his head. "Stop."

Aleksandr and Nataliya looked at him expectantly.

"Don't touch her," Jonathan pleaded. His red, weary eyes gazed up at them with such intensity, they hesitated for a moment. "Please. Please just...don't hurt her."

"We're listening."

0

0

0

It was the same. Everywhere she looked. Same, same, same. Like the vinyl she was listening to was scratched and kept repeating the last phrase over and over again. Like she was frozen in time, staring at nothing.

Each wall had the same height and width as the others. The same color. Even the ceiling and floor were the same. Like a box. The plainest, dullest, most terrible box she'd ever seen.

El didn't pace. She sat, stonily silent, her back to one of the walls. How long had she been there? She didn't know. All she knew were the plain white walls and the pain still residing in her chest.

"Mike," she mumbled. It wasn't a call for help or a wistful cry. It was simply a fact.

As she thought about him, about the time they'd spent together, she felt her heart begin to pound. Strange. It only did that when they kissed. Not when she was only thinking about him.

Nevertheless, the pounding grew stronger, faster. No other sounds penetrated the walls of the box. The beating in her own chest was the only thing to attach to. The only thing to occupy the dead space in her ears.

She closed her eyes, seeing nothing but black. Nothing but the cold emptiness where her powers used to be. All she could think was, *'Wrong. This is wrong.'*

0

0

0

Honestly, these two are some of my favorites in the whole series.

Trying to figure out their dynamic has been super fun and enlightening. They make a super cute Big Brother/Little Sister duo. Hopefully there will be more of them in Season Four!

16. Mom Steve in FULL Force

"Hello?" came the familiar voice of Dr. Owens over the phone.

Robin smiled. "Hey, Uncle Sam," she said. "Good to hear you. Stevie's here, too, if you want to say hi."

"Hey there, kids," Dr. Owens said with a laugh. Nancy scrunched her eyebrows. Though she knew the doctor was easygoing and charismatic, it was strange to hear him so casual with her friends. "What brings you to such a desperate measure as calling me?"

The three teenagers glanced at each other. Nancy took the phone from them and took a deep breath. "Hi, Dr. Owens," she said cautiously, "this is Nancy Wheeler. I have some unfortunate news."

"Hello, Ms. Wheeler," the Doctor replied, his tone hardening. For a moment, hurt coursed through Nancy's mind. Then she remembered she was mostly responsible for the scandal that leaked, causing his laboratory to be restricted.

Hard feelings aside, she launched into the story. "So Jonathan Byers, Eleven, my brother, Mike, and I were on a weekend getaway in Smarton, Michigan. And before you ask, no, our parents didn't know."

Dr. Owens was silent. "That's the stupidest thing you could have done," he muttered, though Nancy thought she caught a hint of awe in his voice. "Though I suppose we never told you that you couldn't."

"Exactly," Nancy said. "But, because it was so stupid, we got kidnapped by Russians. Remember them?"

"I remember," Dr. Owens said wearily. "Let me guess, Yegor found you and assisted you safely out of the compound? And you're all four of you now safe back in Hawkins?"

"Sort of," Nancy muttered. "Mike and I managed to escape. But they took El and ...and Jonathan. They're still in there and we have no idea what's happening to them." To her surprise, her throat began to tighten and tears dripped from her eyes. She hadn't cried at all, the

whole journey. But now, as she pictured El and her Jonathan alone in the compound, she couldn't control the urge.

Steve put a comforting hand on her shoulder, earning a subtle eyebrow raise from Robin.

"I'm sorry about your predicament, Ms. Wheeler," Dr. Owens said, his tone slightly softer. "But I'm afraid all you can do is give me an address and wait for my associates to show up. I assure you, Mr. Byers and Ms. Ives will be safe."

"Thank you," Nancy said, then shoved the phone back in the receiver.

The three of them stood wordlessly, not daring to speak. Nancy tried her best to cry quietly, the tears still slipping down her face. Finally, Steve pulled her into a proper hug, though his face was solemn and somewhat conflicted.

"We're going to get them back, Nance," he said, holding her tight. "Did you hear Sam? He's going to send a bunch of people to get them back."

"I know," Nancy sniffled. "I know."

Robin glanced around awkwardly. "Yeah, I'm sure your boyfriend and his sister are fine. They're tough." She shuffled her feet, pointedly staring, transfixed, at a potted plant on the windowsill.

Finally, Steve and Nancy let go of each other. Each looked sufficiently reddened. "Thanks," Nancy said under her breath.

"Don't mention it," Steve replied. He grabbed a hand towel and breezed by her back towards the living room, leaving Nancy to collect herself.

Robin came up behind him. "Why did you take that?" she asked, gesturing at the towel.

Steve paused. "I don't know," he said after a few seconds. "Instinct. That's weird."

They arrived back in the living room, Nancy close behind them. The

kids were talking quietly amongst themselves, worried undertones accentuating their otherwise cheerful conversation.

"Listen up, scrubs," Steve projected, slinging the towel over his shoulder. "Our friends are in trouble and help is on the way. But it won't get here for who knows how long. So we're gonna sit here and not do anything rash."

Both Robin and Nancy rolled their eyes, sharing a glance. Even the kids had knowing smirks on their faces.

"In your dreams, *Mom*," Dustin said teasingly, eyeing the hand towel. "When was the last time we actually sat at home and did nothing when a faction of us were in mortal danger?"

Steve sighed. "No."

"Yes."

"No."

"Yes," came the resounding defiance from everyone in the room. Steve jumped back in betrayal as even Nancy and Robin looked exasperated.

He pursed his lips. "Fine," he said after a long moment. "Fine, get in the car. But if anybody finds out about this, the blood is on your hands. Not mine." He threw the dish towel down in defeat as the 7 of them trudged out into the cold November afternoon.

0

0

0

I LOVE STEVE HARRINGTON WITH MY WHOLE HEART. Also, for you concerned Jancy shippers very few Stancy shippers, their relationship in this is going to be "grudgingly platonic". They've been through a lot together (they dated for an entire year, pretty much), but there are still some hard feelings. So yeah. And I also love Robin!

17. AndThey're Back!

Mike.

His name echoed in El's head as she pushed fruitlessly against the solid steel door. Over and over again she shoved, willing her powers to return if only for an instant.

After several minutes of unsuccessful attempts, she sank to the floor, tears pooling in her eyes. Gone, she thought. Gone. Powers are gone, Jonathan and Nancy are gone, Mike is gone, Hopper is gone. Everything gone.

She collapsed against the door, sliding into a sitting position. More than anything, she wanted to kick something. Unfortunately, there was nothing in the room to kick other than the walls. Empty.

For once, she wished Papa were there. Papa would make her angry enough to burst through the door. Papa would ignite the fire inside her.

Instead, all she felt was icy cold as she looked hopelessly around her prison. Nowhere to run. Nowhere to hide.

For a moment, the chaos in her mind stilled. She shut out the thoughts and instead simply focused on the world around her.

The smell of the room was sickly clean and chemical. As if she were in a hospital. She couldn't hear anything but the whir of a nearby generator.

And then the generator stopped.

El's head perked up. Suddenly, she could hear mutters. Whisperings from what seemed like the room across the hall

"Tell us where she is or we'll bring little Mop Head in here and chop his fingers off one by one. While you get to watch."

"Please, no."

"And if that's not enough, we will then bring in the girl. We'll make her watch as we kill her brother. Then we'll restart the process with her. And you get to see the whole thing."

Her brother. Mop Head.

Mike.

And they were threatening to kill him.

Something bubbled up inside her, something dangerous and familiar. It started as a simmer, then a boil, then a full fledged explosion. As if a geyser was going off in her chest.

She stood from the floor, eyes narrowing as she slowly turned to face the door. With lethal deliberation, she raised her hand and knocked the door from its hinges.

A trickle of blood fell from her nose. She reached up and wiped it away, a wicked smile starting to grow on her face.

0

0

0

There was a loud clang as Aleksandr and Nataliya edged closer to Jonathan. They jumped back as if he had somehow caused it.

He hadn't, but he had a wild, hopeful feeling that he knew who had.

Sure enough, the door to his chamber dropped to the floor, cleanly broken away from the frame. Standing behind it was El, hair tousled and nose bleeding. Her hand was outstretched in a deadly grasp.

Before the two Russian Guards could make a move towards her, El had twitched her head to the side, leaving both Aleksandr and Nataliya on the ground, eyes rolled into the backs of their head.

"Let's go," El said fiercely. She came up to Jonathan and released him from his restraints. "Find Mike and Nancy."

A voice from behind caught them off guard. "That won't be necessary," he said, breathless. They recognized him as the guard who had taken Mike and Nancy down the other hall.

"What have you done with them?" Jonathan hissed, advancing towards him, fire in his eyes. El was right behind him, hand halfway raised.

The man held up his palms in surrender. "Stop," he commanded. "I'm on your side. I helped Nancy and Mike escape. I...I work for Dr. Samuel Owens."

"Likely story," Jonathan muttered. "Where are they really?"

His eyes pleaded with them. "You have to believe me. Your lives and the lives of your family and friends depend on it."

Jonathan and El shared a glance. Time was running out and they knew it. It was maybe a matter of seconds before a hoard of guards burst into the room, armed to the teeth. Perhaps ...perhaps they wouldn't be able to save the other two even if they were still here. The best way to assure their safety was to escape.

"We'll take your word for it," Jonathan said. He eyed the man's name tag. "Yegor. But if this turns out to be some elaborate way to keep Nancy and Mike here, we're calling Dr. Owens and giving him your specific name. Got it?"

"Got it, got it," Yegor said. "Just please, get out of here now!"

So Jonathan grabbed El's hand and started to pull her through the door. However, the girl quickly collapsed to her knees. Looking at her face, Jonathan realized just how sapped of energy she was.

"Shit," he muttered. He turned back to Yegor. "Help me get her onto my back," he ordered.

Soon El was safely positioned, her arms wrapped tightly around Jonathan's neck. The two of them began to charge through the compound, recklessly turning corners and storming hallways. So far, there had been no guards to be seen.

They soon realized why. As they passed a room that appeared to be a surveillance area. On the largest TV screen, seemingly every officer in the place was rushing to a spot in the opposite side of the compound. When Jonathan narrowed his eyes, he saw a terribly familiar sight.

A demogorgon was loose in the building.

Without a second glance, Jonathan bolted. He remembered their path distinctly, as though it was a recording in his mind. They twisted and turned and ran up a long staircase until finally, they reached the large metal doors.

"Can you open them, El?" Jonathan asked. He himself was exhausted from running and carrying his sister on his back, but had no idea what kind of stress El must be under.

She mustered a nod, then let out a mighty scream as she blasted the door open. Her hand was shaky, yet firm in its purpose. Once the dust and debris settled, the two of them limped through the hole in the wall into the night. El seemed barely conscious. He gripped her legs tighter as her hold on his neck loosened. Together, they scrambled up the steps and into an abandoned parking lot where the truck they'd been brought in still sat.

Before, they hadn't had much time to take in the view. They were in the middle of a large, grassy field, the greenish brown expanse stretching as long as they could see. There was a single parking lot, gray and decidedly unimpressive. The only thing in sight was the highway about a quarter mile away, a small dirt path leading from it towards the parking lot. Glancing back at the doors they came through, they realized it looked like nothing more than a small building with the words, "Restricted Area" written in front.

They were about to start making their way down the road, when two loud, long honks came from a couple of cars speeding down the highway. They pulled off the road and drove down the dirt path before coming to a stop in the parking lot.

Steve was driving one, Robin in his passenger seat, with Nancy in the other, accompanied by Mike. Upon closer inspection, they realized three kids were piled into the back of Nancy and Mike's: Dustin,

Lucas, and Max.

They ran towards Steve's car, clambered into the back, and slammed the door shut. "Drive, damnit, drive!" Jonathan cried, urging Steve away.

The two cars careened out of the parking lot and across the grassy field, merging messily onto the road. Steve pressed his foot into the gas, sending them hurtling as fast as possible.

Jonathan only dared one glance back at where they'd come from. He caught a glimpse of two armed men emerging from the doors. But they disappeared into the landscape as the cars flew towards Hawkins.

0

0

0

Good thing Steve was overruled by his children or else Jonathan and El wouldn't have escaped! The guards would have caught up to them. AND YAY EL'S POWERS! I personally think the reason they went away was a mind issue. Like a mental block. I'll dig more into it in the story. Thanks to everyone leaving such sweet reviews! Totally makes my day :)

18. Joyce Panics (Of Course)

Joyce took a long drag of her cigarette. Jonathan had told her he would be back by Sunday evening. It was now two in the morning of Monday, with no sign of his return.

She knew he wasn't at a photography workshop like he'd said. He'd left his album at home, the one Nancy had gotten him for his birthday last year. He never shot anything without it nearby.

She had let it slide because she assumed he was doing something with friends. He'd mentioned a couple of kids that were nice in his classes. She'd hoped he was sneaking out with them, doing normal teenager stuff.

El, too. The girl had claimed she was having a sleepover with a girl in her AV club. But she, too, had assured Joyce she'd be back by that evening.

However, a call to the house in question had confirmed that El had not been there all weekend.

She would have been willing to look past one or the other. Let them be rebellious kids. But for both of them to disappear and not return when they were supposed to? They should know better than anyone that would send her into a panicked frenzy.

"Will, for the last time," Joyce had sighed, pulling at we hair. "Are you sure you don't know where they went? I don't care if he told you not to tell me; I need to know where he is."

Will had shaken his head. "I swear, they didn't tell me anything," he had promised. "Can I go to bed now? It's almost midnight."

Joyce had nodded in defeat, the wide eyes he'd sent her an indicator that Will was also worried about his brother and sister. And the hurt in his voice made it clear that they really hadn't told him a thing.

Finally, Joyce stood from her chair and made her way over to the phone. The urge to call was too overwhelming. She couldn't stand it.

Punching in the numbers to the local police station, Joyce leaned against the wall, a new cigarette in hand.

As soon as the line picked up, she said anxiously, "Hi, this is Joyce Byers, I'm looking for Chief Jim Hop-" she cut off, pain stabbing through her chest. The instinctual request had slipped out before she had time to think about it.

"Don't know who that is, but we got a Chief," came a slow, annoyed voice of a woman from the other end.

Joyce pursed her lips. "Can I speak to him?" she asked, tapping on the phone with unrestricted anticipation.

"This is she."

"Oh," Joyce said, caught off guard. "Well, two of my children have, uh...have gone missing. A 17 year old boy and a 14 year old girl. They were out with friends and-"

"What time were they supposed to return?" the Chief asked.

Joyce paused. "5:00 PM yesterday," she answered.

The Chief sighed. "As in nine hours ago?"

"Yes."

"Can't help you until they've been missing for 24 hours. Have a good day, Ms. Byers."

"But-"

The line went dead. Joyce threw her phone against the receiver in frustration.

Then something caught her eye. It was a small slip of paper sticking out of the trash can.

Joyce approached the garbage and snatched the note. Uncrumpling it, she gasped.

Packing List

- Two outfits each
- Shampoo
- Hairbrush
- Body Wash
- Credit card
- Indiana drivers license (just in case)
- Protection
- 50 dollars cash

Two outfits each. So they had gone together. Wherever they were, they were together. It both calmed and heightened Joyce's nerves.

Indiana driver's license. There was a possibility he was going to end up in Indiana? A suspicion started creeping into Joyce's mind.

Protection?

Joyce's hand closed angrily around the note. "Hawkins," she muttered. "They've gone back to damn Hawkins."

0

0

0

Because it wouldn't be a true **Stranger Things** story without Joyce losing her mind a little bit. We'll have more of frantic Joyce in later chapters. She's my favorite of the **Stranger Things** moms (excluding Steve, of course).

19. Down Time

El was completely passed out, her head nestled against Mike's shoulder. They lay curled up beneath a blanket, wedged between Dustin on one side and Lucas and Max on the other. Mike was drifting in and out of consciousness, waking each time to check on El and gently adjust her pillow. He ran a gentle hand through her hair.

"It was incredible," Jonathan murmured. He sat by Nancy, gripping her hand tightly and laying across her legs. She rubbed her thumb in a soft, circular motion on his hand, urging him to continue. "One moment, the room was quiet, and the next, the door was blasted in and both Aleksandr and Nataliya were on the ground, completely knocked out."

Nancy smiled. "I'm sure it was amazing. I'm just happy you're alive and safe."

They were all crashed at Steve's place, whose parents were out on a week-long cruise in the Bahamas. Calls had been made to all parents, who thought their kids were each at a different friend's house.

It was almost four in the morning. Steve and Robin were in the other room, talking with low voices and hushed concern. Nancy had tried her best to fall asleep, but every time she started to drift, sudden images of Jonathan being dragged away shot through her mind. Each time, she had to wake up and squeeze his hand or stroke her thumb across his cheek.

El's screams still echoed in her head, as well. She didn't know the younger girl that well, but imagining any fourteen year old subjected to the amount of pain that she had was unbearable.

"Hey, Nance?" came a quiet voice from the kitchen.

She looked up to see Steve, leaning against the doorway. He glared at the floor, his gaze hard and unmoving. "I'm glad we got them back safely," he said. "It was close."

"Yeah. It was," Nancy replied.

Steve let out a sigh, then looked down at Jonathan, who had closed his eyes and was apparently fast asleep. Then he turned around and walked back towards the kitchen.

She looked up. "Steve?"

He faced her.

She offered him a small smile. "Thanks," she said.

He hesitated, then gave her a slight head nod as he retreated to continue talking with Robin.

"Are you guys cool?" Jonathan murmured, sending a quick shock through Nancy's body. She looked down at him, rolling her eyes at the smirk on his face.

"You shouldn't be pretending to sleep just so you can eavesdrop," she reprimanded with a small chuckle. Then she shook her head. "I don't know. I think so. We haven't talked much since...well, since last year."

"Right."

Nancy leaned her head back. "Two years ago, you know what I was doing? I was stressing about a Chemistry test. And whether or not Steve would like my new dress. It all seemed to critical."

"Now you're running from Communist Russians. I get it. I was just working extra shifts at the General Store," Jonathan said. "That and photography. Sometimes I would take a break from brooding and make a mixtape."

Nancy grinned. "Now you're running from the Russian government with Nancy 'the Slut' Wheeler."

"Hey," came Steve's voice from the kitchen. "I heard that. And I'm sorry. For the three hundredth time." Robin's laugh echoed his comment.

Jonathan and Nancy looked at each other, then giggled. As they stared at each other, faces bright for the first time in a long time,

Nancy examined every crinkle, every inch of Jonathan's face that she had grown to love so much.

She lay down next to him on the couch, entwining her arms around his neck, breathing in his familiar scent. "You should get some sleep," she whispered. "You're probably exhausted."

"You know, I haven't been sleeping well," Jonathan admitted. "Not since we left Hawkins. Whenever I get into bed, it's just...it feels empty. I can't manage to drift off."

Smiling, Nancy said, "Well now you've got me here. And I'm not leaving until you actually go to sleep." She nestled her head right in between his shoulder and his cheek, feeling his breathing against her hand on his chest.

Soon, both were fast asleep, content for the first time in a long time.

Steve watched from the entrance to the kitchen. The dish rag was back on his shoulder, hanging limply and lifelessly. His face was shadowy, his eyes seeming to glaze over as he stared at the two of them, happy and blissful in their sleep. Something stirred inside him, nasty and miserable.

Robin came up and stood next to him. She put a hand on his shoulder, the other on her hip. "Don't worry about it, dingus," she said. "They're happy. And soon you will be, too. I'm sure of it."

Nodding, Steve turned around. "I guess so. Maybe. I'm not so sure anymore."

0

0

0

First of all, cute Jonathan and Nancy. As always. I've kind of started to focus more on them because I figure that Mike and Eleven are so popular that they get enough attention (but there will still be a lot of them in this story, don't worry). Second of all, I feel like I shouldn't have to say this, but Robin and Steve

are also going to be strictly platonic. We love a good supportive LGBTQ+ ally. Anyway thanks for reading yet another chapter! If you could leave a review to let me know what you like, that would be so amazing!

20. Big Party Time (sans Will)

When they all awoke, the ground outside was covered in a thick layer of glistening white snow. A call to Mrs. Wheeler assured them that school was cancelled for the day, leaving them to laze about the house as they wished.

El was the last one asleep, slumped across the couch with as many blankets as they could find piled on top of her. The kids huddled around her, each desperate for her to wake so they could greet her. They'd been in separate cars on the drive home, and as soon as they'd arrived at Steve's house, El and Mike had curled up and fallen asleep.

"I'm hugging her first," Max announced.

Lucas snorted. "Like hell you are," he challenged.

Suddenly, El stirred. She opened her eyes, taking in the view of her four friends crowded around her. She hesitated for a moment, then beamed up at them.

"El," Dustin exclaimed, leaning forward and wrapping his arms around her. Lucas and Max shared an exasperated look, then simply rolled their eyes and sat back.

El inspected Dustin's mouth closely. "Still no teeth," she said mournfully.

Dustin shrugged. "Suzie says I kiss better without them."

Letting out a genuine laugh, El turned from him to Max. She leapt off the couch and wrapped her friend in a giant bear hug. The girls held each other tightly, as if letting go would somehow send them apart again.

They pulled apart, El inspecting Max's wardrobe. She wore a fiery red Thrasher sweatshirt and dark black jeans. Her hair was tied up in a tight bun, her eyes accentuated with sparkling red eye shadow.

"Bitchin," El exclaimed.

Max laughed. "Yeah," she said smugly, "I guess so."

Lucas pushed her aside. "Alright, that's enough." He smiled widely at El, opening his arms. For a brief moment, he was transported back to when he first met her. Distrust, anger, fear. All of that was gone now, replaced with affection and overwhelming relief that she wasn't hurt.

The two embraced tightly. "Missed you," she said.

"Yeah, yeah, I missed you, too," Lucas said. "I'm just glad that you're not still being held captive by the commies."

"Alright, everybody back up," Mike announced waving his arms like a traffic guard. "She needs her personal space, ladies and gents. You guys are overwhelming her."

El rolled her eyes. "I'm fine," she told Mike with a small smile.

"Yeah, piss off," Max said, shoving him in the chest. The two girls giggled as Mike readjusted his shirt and pushed his hair out of his face.

"Not funny, you two. This was the part I missed the least about El living here," he muttered, stepping back to stand between Dustin and Lucas.

"Hey, it's almost noon. What do you dipshits want for lunch?" Steve called from the kitchen. He emerged into the Living Room, dish towel still hung over his shoulder. "I've got pretty much every type of food you can imagine, so don't be shy."

"Spaghetti," Dustin called back. "And Apple Taters."

Steve squinted. "Apple Taters? What the hell are those?"

"Nevermind," Dustin sighed. "My Grandpa Shane used to make them for us at Henderson family reunions. But I guess they're just too sophisticated for you, Steve Harrington."

Scrunching his eyebrows, Steve disappeared back into the kitchen. "I'll get you your apple taters," they heard him muttering. "They'll be the best damn apple taters you ever tasted."

The five kids looked at each other, then let out a loud laugh. For that moment, they forgot all about the monsters, about the Russians. They were just a group of friends on a snow day, making fun of their babysitter.

Then Mike's face dropped. "I wish Will were here," he said. "It doesn't feel right without him."

Lucas put a hand on his shoulder. "I know how you feel."

"Should have invited him to your little thing," Max said with a shrug. "Kind of on you, man."

Mike rolled his eyes. "Yeah, because he would have had so much fun hanging around El and I all day. Not to mention Jonathan and Nancy. We didn't even tell him where we were going so he wouldn't squeal to Joyce."

"He's probably freaking out right now," Dustin said with an incredulous look.

"Wait," El said suddenly, face filled with fear. "What day is it?"

The other kids shared a worried glance. She'd been asleep when the call cancelling school had been made. She had lost all track of time in the prison; she probably thought it was Sunday still.

"It's Monday," Max said, putting a hand on El's shoulder.

"Shit," El exclaimed, walking past her friends to Jonathan, who was talking quietly with Nancy and Robin. She reached up and tugged on his sleeve.

He turned around, brushing a hair out of her face. "Morning, sleepyhead," he said with a smile. "What' up?"

"Joyce," El said simply.

Jonathan's face fell. He rushed towards the phone, picking it up and pressing buttons frantically. But the little machine remained silent, sending both Byers siblings into a panicked frenzy.

"She's going to kill us," Jonathan groaned. "Damn snow knocking out power lines."

El pulled at her hair. For some reason, she felt this was far scarier than anything she'd faced in the Russian compound, the Starcourt Mall, or Hawkins Lab. A worked up Joyce could make anybody scared for their life.

Mike put an arm around her. "It'll be fine," he said. "We'll contact her as soon as the power lines are back up."

Somehow, that didn't reassure her.

0

0

0

WHOLESONE Byers siblings interaction. I love these two so much. Honestly, I'm kind of enjoying writing the sibling dynamics more than the romantic relationships haha. They're just so adorable! Also, I LOVE these kids. I tried super hard to get the chemistry right between all of them.

21. Girl Talk

"Shit," Jonathan muttered, returning to where Nancy and Robin were standing. "Shit. I can't believe I forgot about my mom."

Nancy put a hand up to his cheek. "Don't worry," she said soothingly. "Once we tell her the truth, I'm sure she'll be too distracted with the Russians to be upset with you and El."

"That's not what I'm worried about," Jonathan said. "I don't care if I get in trouble. But my mom, she's been through so much already...I hate it when I make her worry about me. It feels cruel." A tear fell down his cheek and Nancy brushed it away, an affectionate smile forcing its way across her face.

Robin shuffled her feet. "So, I think I'm going to go help Steve in the kitchen." She moved to leave, but before she could make it in, Steve himself stuck his head out.

"Actually, could you send Jonathan in? I think...uh, I need his help with the Apple Taters. I can't quite figure it out," he said, adjusting the dish towel on his shoulder.

Nancy and Jonathan shared a very loaded look, then he made his way into the kitchen for quality bonding time with Steve Harrington. Nancy watched with concern, the details of several of the two boys' encounters still fresh in her mind.

"That's totally a completely innocent invitation," Robin said, raising her eyebrows. "I'm sure they're just going to talk about regular guy stuff and definitely nothing about you at all."

Nancy let out a laugh. "You're so right," she agreed, sipping her water.

There was a moment of silence. The air between them was charged, though not entirely negative. Nancy remembered her vaguely from High School; she had been involved in band and drama. They'd never spoken.

"So are you and Steve..." Nancy began, looking towards the kitchen.

"No," Robin said with a laugh. "Absolutely not. I mean, we're best friends and he's a fun person to hang out with, but no."

Nancy leaned forward. "Not even sometime far in the future?"

"Trust me," Robin said. "I will never be romantically involved with Steve Harrington. He's...not my type."

Nancy narrowed her eyes, detecting a subtle undertone in the other girl's voice. "What do you mean by that?" she asked. Though she and Steve weren't together anymore, she wouldn't let Robin be mean to him in any way.

"It's not like he's a bad person in any way," Robin said, her voice becoming shaky. "But it'll just-it'll just never happen. So drop it, please."

Closing her eyes, Nancy took in a deep breath. "Look," she said with a low tone. "I've never told this to anyone except Jonathan. But...when I was seven, I kissed my best friend."

"So?" Robin said, her eyes still averted. "Plenty of kids kiss their best friends. They don't know social boundaries yet."

"Her name was Sarah."

Robin's eyes widened. "Oh," she said.

"And when my mom found out, she flipped. Screamed at me for hours. She told me I wasn't allowed to hang out with Sarah ever again. And so I internalized that what I felt was wrong. Like it was unnatural for me to like boys and girls. That's why I dated Steve, I think. To prove that there wasn't anything wrong with me," Nancy said.

Robin bit her lip. "I see."

Glaring at the other girl for a moment, Nancy threw her hands up. "Nevermind," she said harshly. "That was stupid of me to say. Forget about it."

"No," Robin said, grabbing Nancy's wrist. "It's not stupid. Nothing about it is stupid. I went through the same thing. It's scary and it's uncomfortable and sometimes you just want to curl up and...and die."

Nancy nodded. "Yeah," she replied. "It's sort of like that." She looked down at her feet. "I guess I had it easier. I can't imagine what you've gone through."

"Well, you get used to it."

"Yeah."

This time the silence between them was comfortable, strengthening. As if the girls had known each other their whole lives. They weren't strangers that had grown up in the same town, they were survivors sharing the load they'd been carrying for years.

"So this begs the question," Robin finally said, a gleam in her eye. "Did you also totally crush on Bette Midler for your whole childhood?"

Nancy let out a loud laugh. "Yes," she exclaimed. "And you know what? There was a girl in your grade that reminded me of her. So every time I passed her in the hallway, my heart would totally skip a beat."

"Wait. Was it Tammy Thompson?" Robin asked. "Because I did, too! We were in Senior History together and every time she answered a question..." the girl fluttered her hands across her face.

"You should talk to her," Nancy insisted.

Robin grimaced. "And risk getting outed to the whole town? I loved Tammy, but that girl cannot keep a secret."

They laughed, a pure and bubbling sound that seemed to release years of stress and pain. Even the kids looked over at them with varying expressions of shock and disapproval.

"Ahoy, ladies," Steve said, popping briefly back into the Living Room. "Lunch is on in five. I hope you haven't been talking about me at all."

Sharing a glance, the two girls launched into another round of hysterics. Steve backed away slowly, a sudden fear forming of the friendship that seemed to have grown between the two girls that had broken his heart.

0

0

0

Bisexual Nancy! This chapter is super near and dear to my heart. As I was writing it, I had no idea where I was going to go with it. I knew I wanted her and Robin to connect really easily. I relate very strongly to Nancy, so it was also therapeutic and eye opening to tell a little bit of my own story through her :) Obviously her being bisexual is not canon, but I think it works. It honestly might not even come up again in this story, but I wanted to have a little homage to the power of queer girls connecting and empowering each other 3

22. MORE Girl Talk

Returning to the kitchen, Steve shook his head. "They're going to kill all of us," he predicted, nodding his head towards Robin and Nancy, still wiping away tears in the other room.

Jonathan looked up from the pot of spaghetti he'd been stirring. "You're surprised?" he asked with a small smirk.

Rather than responding, Steve took a seat at the bar. He gazed over at Jonathan, his expression tight and pensive. "No, I'm not surprised," he muttered quietly. Then, with a louder voice, he said, "Look, I didn't just ask you in here to help me cook."

"Figured as much," Jonathan said, not looking away from the pot.

"I mean-after the first incident with the demogorgon, I kind of thought everything would go back to normal. And that I wouldn't really have to talk to you ever again," Steve said, waving his hands around as he began to clean off the counter. "No offense."

"None taken. I hoped the same."

"But after the second time, with the demodogs and all that, I just...I realized that this is kind of my life now. And that I was going to have to get along with you because you were just as tightly wrapped up in all this as I was. Even more so." Steve lowered his head, hands massaging the bridge of his nose. "But I couldn't force myself to say anything to you."

"Because of Nancy," Jonathan finished, his tone soft and understanding.

Steve nodded. "Yeah. Because I was angry. Not-not at either of you guys. But it just hurt too much."

"I'm sorry."

Holding up his hands, Steve said, "Don't be. I'm over it. That's why I feel like I can talk to you now without throwing something."

"Reassuring," Jonathan muttered.

"Look," Steve said. "I-I know I was a douchebag to you for all of High School. The things I said to you in the alley that day after the whole 'slut' incident...they weren't OK. But I was angry and hurting and you were the most natural thing for me to take it all out on. I did try to apologize. But then..."

"Then the demogorgon came and kind of ruined everything."

"Exactly."

"I guess I should apologize, too," Jonathan said. "For generally being a creep and...everything with Nancy. I'm sorry that I made you hate me."

Steve shook his head. "I've never hated you. I mean, sure, there have been plenty of times that I've wanted to kick your teeth in. Once I heard about you and Nancy, I went home and broke my mom's heirloom vase. But it was never really about you." He ran a hand through his voluminous locks. "It was more about me. Back in high school, I was terrible. I didn't really care about anybody except myself. Nancy changed that in me."

Jonathan smiled. "She has a way of bringing out the best in people."

Steve grinned too. "Yeah." He turned and placed a hand on Jonathan's shoulder. "Look. What I wanted to say was...no hard feelings. I want to put the past behind us. Because it isn't about which of us deserves Nancy. It's about who makes her happy. And you make her happy like I never could."

"Thanks," Jonathan said with a nod. "For the record, I didn't hate you either. Just didn't like you or bother to get to know you. You were in the vast majority. I've got issues, in case you haven't noticed."

Laughing, Steve picked up the pot of spaghetti off the stove and started walking towards the dining room. "Don't we all, man?"

Jonathan smiled and followed him out to find Robin and Nancy talking with the kids. While the tone was hushed, there wasn't any worry or urgency in the way they spoke. It seemed to be just an

average conversation. Something they hadn't all had in...well, forever, it seemed. Though they knew it had only been around a day since Mike and Nancy had burst through Dustin's front door.

"Spaghetti and Apple Taters are up," Steve called, placing the pot on the table. "Where are the plates and silverware?"

Dustin grimaced. "Oops," he said with a nervous chuckle. "I forgot to set them."

"Well go get them set now, Henderson," Steve commanded, gesturing to the kitchen. "And next time do what you're asked the first time."

"OK, Mom," Dustin said, rolling his eyes.

Once the whole table was set, everyone came and helped themselves. Even Mike and Nancy, whose mother was known in the PTA for her spaghetti recipe, had to admit that Steve's skills in the kitchen were surprisingly impressive.

"This is great. Thanks, Steve," Lucas said, chowing down on a large mouthful.

Glancing at Jonathan, Steve smiled. "Thanks, Big L. But it was definitely a team effort."

Just as the silence of enjoying a good meal settled upon them, there was a loud knock at the door. Everyone looked at each other, a sudden cloud of tension dropping upon them. Nancy finally stood and walked towards the door, her hand straying to the enormous kitchen knife she'd slid into her belt.

When she pulled open the door, she jumped back in surprise and fear. The kids at the table behind let out gasps, choked noises, or wails of despair. Steve and Robin shared a slightly confused glance, while Jonathan looked as though he were about to pass out.

Joyce Byers stood in the frame, practically shaking with anger.

0

0

I'M SO SORRY I'VE BEEN ON HIATUS FOR SO LONG. My computer totally fried and I was trying my best to fix it. Sadly, it's completely broken and I won't get a new one for a few weeks. So it's going to be a while before I upload again! I have a solid plan for the rest of the story, though. Thanks for you guys' patience!

23. Karen Assumes her Daughter's a Slut

Brushing past Nancy, Joyce grabbed Jonathan's shirt collar. "Go get in the car," she said, her voice steely and cold. The voice was what really worried Nancy. Normally, when Joyce was freaking out, she was hot and shaky and loud. This Joyce was different. Dangerous. Nancy felt a shiver down her spine.

"Wait, mom, you don't understand," Jonathan started, standing from his seat.

"Nope. Nope, I don't want to hear any of it," Joyce said, throwing her hands up. "I don't want to hear anything you have to say right now." She marched around the table and put her arm around El's shoulder. However, the gesture held no affection. "We're going home. Now. I am very disappointed." She looked around, holding the gazes of each kid. "In all of you."

Jonathan came up to her and grabbed her wrists. "Mom-"

Joyce wrenched her hands free and glared wildly up at her son. "Jonathan," she hissed, "I have been very stressed out for the past nine hours worrying about you. I got no sleep and I haven't had any coffee or cigarettes this morning. Will is home all by himself worried sick about you two. You have five seconds to get into the car before I explode."

"Russians," came a small voice. Everyone looked down to see El, her face white and shaking hands.

Joyce crouched down next to her, all hostility gone. "Wh-what did you say?"

Mike stood and walked over to them. "She said Russians," he repeated. "You might want to sit down for this."

0

0

0

"They...they tortured you?" Joyce asked, her anger completely replaced by fear and shock.

"Yes," El replied, unable to meet her mother's eyes.

"Oh," Joyce exclaimed. "Oh, I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry, are you OK? Do you need to go to a doctor? A therapist?"

El shook her head. "Used to it," she answered quietly.

Silence shook the room. Nancy had almost forgotten how many years El had spent locked up in Hawkins Lab with people who saw her as nothing more than a weapon. Undoubtedly, she'd suffered there more than any of them could imagine.

"After that," she continued, distracting from the suddenly somber air, "They took El and Jonathan away. Mike and I were supposed to go somewhere else, but the guard with us worked for Dr. Owens. He brought us to a garbage chute, where we managed to escape."

"Meanwhile El was in a solitary confinement chamber," Jonathan added, picking up the story. "And I was...I don't know. I was unconscious for a lot of the time. Eventually I ended up in an interrogation room. They wanted to know where we had moved to. Because they're looking for you."

Joyce rubbed her forehead. "Shit," she muttered.

"Eventually El got her powers back and basically saved us all," Jonathan finished. He looked around. "Oh, also they have a demogorgon that may or may not be loose in the compound, and therefore, loose in the world."

The kids looked at Joyce expectantly. She looked as though she were about to answer, when she suddenly stood and went to the phone. Everyone else glanced around at each other in confusion, then stood and followed her.

As Mike squinted at the phone, he realized that Joyce was dialing a familiar number. 8-6-6-7-4-0-4-5-3-1. He and Nancy exchanged a worried and confused look.

"Joyce," Nancy began, "maybe calling my house isn't the best idea right now. She thinks Mike is at the Sinclairs and that I'm at my friend Stacey's house. If she found out we lied, then-"

But Joyce just shook her head and put the phone to her ears. "She already knows Mike isn't at the Sinclairs. I stopped there first on the way into Hawkins. So that's already down the drain. I'm calling to tell her I'm taking you guys on a road trip because Will's not doing well. Got it?"

The kids stared at her in silent affirmation.

Karen's voice sounded over the phone. "Hello, you've reached the Wheeler's."

"Hi Karen," Joyce replied, "I found them."

They heard their mother's sharp exhale on the other end of the phone. "Oh, thank the heavens. Where have they been?"

"There was a big get together over at Steve Harrington's house," Joyce answered.

There was a small bit of silence from the Wheeler's end. Nancy and Mike grimaced, waiting for their mother to blow.

But she didn't. "How fun," Karen said, though it sounded as though her teeth were clenched. "He's a good boy and such a great role model for the kids. Tell me, is, uh...is Nancy there also?"

Nancy cursed under her breath. It was so typical of her mother to jump to conclusions like that.

"Yeah, she's here," Joyce told her. "Look, the real reason I came into town is because Will is doing really poorly, so I just wanted to collect the kids and maybe drive them up to see him. He's really lonely in his hospital room and misses his friends, you know? It shouldn't take long."

"Oh, of course," Karen said. "Poor boy. If you need anything, let me know, ok? Hang on, where should I send mail again? I might want to send you a package or something just to make Will feel better."

"Uh, I-" Joyce stammered.

"That's right! 34 Preston Drive, Martville, Michigan. Alright, take care, Joyce." And the line went flat.

"Joyce," Mike said quietly. "Our phones are all tapped."

0

0

0

I'm back! Finally, my computer was fixed. With me now back at school, I'll probably update once every few days, but I'm so excited to finish out this story! Now Joyce is back in the mix and it's almost as if the gang is all back together (RIP my man Hopper). I have some really cool ideas for how to end it, so pls don't hate me for disappearing for like three weeks and keep reading haha.

24. Nothing Goes Wrong Part Two

They stayed put, simply not daring to leave. For all they knew, Russians were watching them like hawks. One slip could lead to the capture of any of them.

Jonathan and Joyce were speaking quietly together in the corner. He seemed as if he were explaining something very intently to her. Nancy stayed with Steve and Robin, cleaning up dinner. The kids were playing a game, though it sounded as though none of them were enjoying it very much.

At last, late that night, something happened. The phone rang. Nancy was starting to hate that sound. Before anybody else could move to answer it, she took matters into her own hands. "Hello?" she said, clutching it to her ear.

Heavy breath came from the other end. "Good morning, Ms. Wheeler. Or should I say afternoon? Such a pleasure to hear your voice again. We're missing you at the compound."

She cursed under her breath. It was the General himself. "What do you want?" she hissed into the phone.

"I want to speak to the only adult present at the house you're staying at," the General answered. "She's practically a celebrity among us here. I've been dying to talk with her ever since that stunt she pulled with her bald comrade and her exploded boyfriend. Sorry about that, by the way. She must miss him...to bits."

Nancy scowled. "She's not here," she replied curtly. "You must have the wrong number."

"Wait," Joyce said, before Nancy could slam the phone back into the receiver. "I'll talk to them."

Reluctantly, Nancy handed the phone over to Joyce.

"I heard you were looking for me," Joyce said, suddenly dropping her frail and scared demeanor. "You have some of the greatest minds in

the world working for you and you couldn't find even one crazy lady and her three kids? That's impressive."

There was a loud snort. "We were weakened after your attack last year. Plus with the government on our tails, there wasn't much we could do. But we have you now. We have you right where we want you."

"And what's that going to do for you?" Joyce asked. "Killing me won't give you anything you want. Are you just looking for petty revenge?"

"If you hurt us once, you can hurt us again. I assure you your death would be anything but petty," the General told her, his gravelly voice lowering. "Now, I believe that you are with two of your children."

A sudden pain flared in Joyce's chest. It was like an alarm bell blaring at full force. "Maybe I am," she said carefully.

"Well, I am, as you say, one of the greatest minds in the world. Therefore, I can do basic math. I was led to believe that you have three children. That makes me think that there might be one more somewhere in the world. Small, scared, unsure of what's going on..." the General chuckled. "Want to say hello to your mother, William?"

Suddenly, Will's panicked voice could be heard. "Mom?" he called.

"Will?" Joyce exclaimed. "Will, it's okay, we're coming for you. Don't you worry. It's going to be-

Before she could continue her rush of frantic comfort, the General's voice cut her off. "You can get him home safe and sound," the General offered, "if you follow my instructions clearly and exactly, you will receive your son back."

For a moment, Joyce didn't dare breathe. "You bastard," she hissed.

"What was that?" the General asked.

"I said you're a BASTARD," Joyce repeated, practically spitting into the phone. "You're a damn bastard and a pathetic excuse for a human being. Go back to the depths of hell you crawled out of."

There was silence from the other line. "I'm sorry you feel that way. Our instructions are these: meet us at Johnson's warehouse tomorrow at noon. Don't come with anyone. Don't bring any weapons. Understand you are turning yourself into captivity. However, your son will be released. If you do not show up, consider him...gone."

"We'll stop you," Joyce growled. Her knuckles were white from gripping the phone so tight.

The General scoffed. "Good luck without your superweapon."

"Our what?"

"Little girl. With her superpowers gone, you stand no chance against us," the General taunted. "None at all. Ah well. I must leave now. Have fun making your decision. I wouldn't want to be in your place."

As Joyce hung the phone on the wall, a small smile broke onto her face.

"What?" Jonathan exclaimed, moving to her and putting his hand on her shoulder. "What is it?"

His mother breathed out a sigh. "I think we may have just gotten the upper hand."

0

0

0

Ok, I swear I have an excuse for not updating lol. i was finishing up with writing my first fully completed work: a novella about Ricky Goldsworth and CC Tinsley. If you know who they are, great. If you don't, don't worry about it. But that's what was up. I'm back and inspired now and will hopefully update a few times a week!